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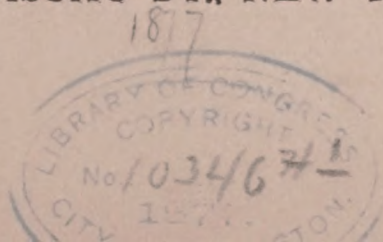
# ALMOST A MAN



*35 juvenile*  
*Shields, Mrs. Sarah Ann*  
BY S. ANNIE FROST.

ILLUSTRATED BY  
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# ALMOST A MAN.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *A TALK OF THE FUTURE.*

"I HOPE you will be a comfort to your father. You are almost a man!"

Harry Westbrooke looked up as the gentle voice fell upon his ears, wondering a little at the words, and still more at the earnest tone.

A comfort to his father! Because, and his eyes filled with tears at this thought, his mother was dead.

Harry could scarcely realize that his father could be comforted by any act of love offered by a son. To him, the words *father* and *mother* bore none of the sweet and sacred associations that ought to cling to them in the hearts of all children. His mother, a woman of fashion, had given Harry to the care of nurses, governesses, and teachers, rarely spending more than a few minutes in the nursery from which four little ones had been carried



to Greenwood, till only Harry a lad of seventeen and Etta a winsome little maiden of four years, remained to call Mrs. Westbrooke mother.

Harry's memories of her were not the memories of morning or evening prayer learned from her lips, of wise counsel and of loving guidance. He thought of her in rich beautiful dresses, walking with him in crowded promenades, or driving with him seated beside her, also handsomely dressed. He remembered her in evening dress, brushing his cheek in a careless good-night kiss as she left for ball or opera. She had taken a severe cold at her last ball, which had resulted in pneumonia, and Harry shuddered as he recalled the touch of her cold lips as she lay beautiful and pale in her coffin.

His father, who had seldom denied him any extravagant wish of his boyish heart, who kept him supplied with money, and gave him a caress when they met, was to Harry only an indulgent guardian, who sometimes required a little coaxing for an especial favor. But it was a new and startling thought that there could ever exist that close companionship implied by the word *comfort*.

"I don't know, Aunt Ellen," the lad said at last, slowly, "how I could comfort papa."



Miss Westbrooke sighed, softly stroking her nephew's brown curls. In the three short weeks during which she had been an inmate of her brother's splendid house, she had seen how little home love there was in the family; but she knew too that her brother had dearly loved his wife, had been proud of her beauty and accomplishments, and sorrowed deeply for her loss, seeing none of a Christian's comfort in his bereavement.

"I have been here so little, Harry," she said, "that I could not tell you as well as you will know yourself what will best please your father. But he will naturally look to his children now for companionship and comfort."

She passed on as she spoke, leaving Harry to think over her words. What would please his father?

The boy asked himself the question very seriously. Touched by the solemnity of the death scenes just over, in his mother's funeral, his naturally affectionate disposition craved some new outlet, and his aunt's words suggested one. He would like to please the grave sad man who was seated alone in the library, waiting the end of the long day. But how could he do so?

He had told him of winning the Latin prize;



of being complimented for his uniformly gentlemanly conduct at the Academy where he was preparing for college ; of his success in conquering the obstinacy of the horse that was his last birthday gift. All these things had seemed to please his father at the time he heard them, but there was nothing new to add to the list. For four dreary days, between his mother's death and her funeral, he had been confined to the house, weeping often, and yet without any of the sense of bitter loss that a loving, tender mother would have left in the heart of her only son. Something very beautiful and bright was gone from the house, that was all.

Very slowly Harry went to the library, feeling that it was a duty suggested by his aunt's words, but without any hope of really giving comfort to his father. To his surprise, Mr. Westbrooke looked up eagerly at his entrance, and held out his hand. "My son," he said tenderly, and drew him close beside him.

After a moment of silence he began to talk of his dead wife, evidently thankful to pour out his love and sorrow to a sympathizing heart ; and Harry, listening respectfully and sorrowfully, felt that he was obeying his aunt's desire, and comforting his father.



"She was proud of her boy," the father said, holding the lad's hand fast in a loving clasp ; " she looked forward to your coming of age, Harry, to your being at some future day my partner in business ! Well ! well ! It seems but yesterday you were a baby, and now you are seventeen, almost a man !"

Here was a new duty opened to Harry with the same words his aunt had used. It was not a prospect he liked. A partnership in his father's business meant probably that he would have to pass his time in a dull countinghouse, reading and answering business letters, attending to customers and clerks, a dry routine, even worse than the drudgery of school. For there were vacations and resting hours in school-life, but Harry could not remember that his father ever rested or took a vacation.

If his mother took him with Etta and the servants to a watering place for the summer, Mr. Westbrooke remained in the city, working at the countinghouse in the hot days as well as the cold ones. In the evening, while Harry studied or had young friends to entertain, or while Mrs. Westbrooke was at some gay party, Mr. Westbrooke was usually in the library, occupied with letters or papers, or receiving business calls.



Harry's visions of a future manhood had been very different from this prospect of absorption in business. He had looked forward to greater freedom after the restraints of school and college were over; to the possession of fast horses, more manly attire, perhaps the tour of Europe to complete his gentlemanly education. After a childhood and boyhood of utterly selfish gratification, he was but ill prepared for duty that would require thought for another, even if that other was an indulgent parent.

He listened, respectfully indeed, but with a very rebellious heart, while his father talked for some time of that future of business life that had been one of his own cherished hopes for years, but which was entirely a new idea to his son's mind.

"But am I not to go to college, sir?" he asked at length.

"Oh, yes, and then you had better have a year's tuition in a commercial college, unless indeed I decide to put you under old Poulson, who has been my own head clerk for twenty-five years. He can well instruct you. I am not a young man, Harry, nearing seventy, my son, and I look forward to your introduction to the business to put new life and enterprise into it."

"I am afraid, sir, I shall prove but a poor busi-



ness man. I have no taste for accounts or the dull routine of trade."

"You will find your interest will grow with your success. I was not the son of a rich man, taken as partner into a business already in a flourishing condition. I started with the lowest drudgery of the warehouse, making the fires, sweeping the floors, before I was sixteen. But I worked my way from one position to another, trying to do my work faithfully, carefully saving a portion of every dollar I earned, till I stood at the head of the very firm where I commenced my career. My employers, my senior partners have died or retired, till I am alone, keeping for my son a partnership which many have sought! It has been my dream since you were a babe in long white frocks, Harry. Your mother wanted you to be a gentleman, with accomplishments and a first-rate education, so we will not change your school or habits, but when you graduate and are of age, I hope to see you begin a successful business career, and double the fortune your father has made."

That sounded pleasant. Knowing that Mr. Westbrooke had made a sufficient fortune to live in luxury for many years, Harry liked the sound of those last words. Double his father's fortune!



That was worth some sacrifice surely, worth giving years of life to dull routine and ceaseless work. And after all, he would enter into business life a gentleman, junior partner in the firm, above the clerks and salesmen, not an office-boy, under the orders of even the porters. Harry's long face brightened a little. "I suppose there will be a great deal to learn, sir," he said.

"Yes, a great deal. But we will make it easy for you, Harry. I never want to see you slaving as your father slaved for years. Your path will be made smoother for you, though you must remember there is no great success without industry and perseverance, even if you need not practise the close economy that gave me my first capital. I was a poor boy and I am a rich man, and I owe it to the favor of no man, but to my own hard work, strict honesty and perseverance. I hope to to see you succeed with the same qualities."

Yet Harry had been educated in self-indulgence, ease, and extravagance; had been petted at school for his intelligence and love of books, foolishly flattered at home for his handsome face and gentlemanly address; had servants to save him from lifting a finger to help himself, and owed his present freedom from positive vice solely to a fastidious



repugnance to anything low or vulgar, not to any principle, nor to any higher teaching than that of expediency or regard to appearances.

He left the library after some further conversation on the same topic, and went to his own room. The next day he would resume his interrupted studies, and he busied himself with his books and papers, studying closely until dinner-time as he had done every day, hoping to retain the position in his classes that he had won by close application to books he loved.

Mental indolence was no temptation to Harry Westbrooke. He loved to trace out intricate problems, to conquer difficulties of study, and to hold up his head proudly in the schools where he was a student. Inclined to arrogance, he looked down upon boys intellectually his inferiors, as he looked down upon those who wore shabby clothes and soiled their hands by menial work.

To thank God for his active intellect, to humbly own his mental powers as a gift from his Creator, was a lesson Harry Westbrooke had never learned. In his proud estimation, his mind was his own possession, his progress the result of his own application; and he relied solely upon his perseverance and study to keep the head of his classes, and out-



strip his rivals in the schools. What was difficult, he was proud of conquering; what was easy, he was rather contemptuous of knowing.

"I think," was his thought as the dinner-bell, silent for four days, summoned him from a long Latin composition, "I think I have gained rather than lost since I left school. It has been so very quiet in the house, that I could study famously, and I am pretty sure Mr. Huber will not count my absence against me, for such a reason as kept me at home. Poor mamma!" and he sighed as the train of thought brought back the sorrow to his mind; "poor mamma! she was very proud of my Latin prize. She made father buy my watch the very next day."

It was strange, but entirely true, that the lad's only sweet memories of his mother were associated with costly presents, or some fond proud praise of his acquirements to friends. Mrs. Westbrooke had not left that most precious of all maternal legacies, tender motherly kisses, gentle Christian influence and teaching, caresses straight from a heart full of mother love. Her children loved her only as a far-off beautiful vision, attired in dresses too costly for baby fingers to touch, sitting in rooms far too expensively furnished for children's plays, busied



with gayeties from which little folks were strictly banished.

Harry, as he came out from the nursery to more advanced boyish pursuits and studies, had sometimes been admitted to his mother's sitting-room, when he was carefully dressed, and would behave with strict propriety, and was usually very glad to escape from the restraint, to his games and young companions.

Yet even with these he was always under the eyes of a nurse or governess, until he was twelve years old, when he entered the Academy, and had acquired a fastidious dislike to all things rough or rude. A hearty game of romps he considered low, and his little affectations of foppishness would have been ludicrous if they were not painful to a thoughtful observer. He was careful about his dress, neat to dandyism, and only saved from being a silly fop by a true love of study, and an active vigorous intellect.

He put aside his pen, arranged his papers, and was brushing his hair, when an impatient little fist pounded upon the door of his room.

"Harry, 'et me in!" cried a sweet baby voice.  
"I 'se doing to dinner wiv 'oo."

"You! Oh no, Etta," Harry said, opening the



door, and lifting his little sister in his arms. "Little girls do n't come to the table."

"But I is," the child persisted. "Aunt Ellen asked papa, an' papa said 'ess."

"He did. Come along then. Shall I carry you?"

"No. Put Etta down an' she'll 'alk by 'oo like a big lady to dinner. Don't 'oo see I'm all spandy clean for dinner. Oh my!" And full of the importance of this first introduction to her father's table, Etta tossed back the long golden curls from her face, smoothed her snowy dress and broad black sash, and walked gravely beside her tall brother, her blue eyes full of earnest triumph at this great step in her baby-life.

"Aunt Ellen says little dirls 'aint bothers if they 'have nice," she said, in a confidential whisper; "an' she do n't wear shiny fings little dirls must n't touch, like mamma, but tooked me in her lap an' told me a booful, booful 'tory 'bout a bad child an' a dood child, same as me when I'm bad an' dood. An' she finks dolls a' n't same as folks, 'cause they do n't know about fings."

"What things, Etta?"

"Black sashes an' fwocks an' hats, same as mine."

But here Etta's confidences were cut short by opening the diningroom door, and the explanation must be made in another chapter.

Miss Ellen Westbrooke, who had consented to remain for a time with her brother, had won his consent to having Etta with the family at meal-times, and had provided a high chair for her. And her father missing the beautiful face of his wife, and the usual guests around his table, was well pleased to see the baby face, grave with importance and the necessity of perfect decorum.

Without a word of silent or spoken blessing the Westbrookes sat down to their luxurious meal.



## CHAPTER II.

*AUNT ELLEN.*

WHEN Miss Westbrooke had left Harry in the drawingroom, she had gone directly to the nursery where Etta slept, played, ate, and in short lived, with her nurse Margaret, a middle-aged woman who had the sole charge of the child, although Etta took a daily walk or drive with a smart French nurse, whose ungrammatical and ignorant use of her native language was expected to give the child a good foundation for her future education.

This young woman Miss Westbrooke found seated before a fancy table covered with black materials, while upon her lap lay a large and expensive doll. Margaret working busily at the other side of the room was evidently not favorably inclined towards Jeannette or her occupation.

"What are you doing?" Miss Westbrooke asked, seeing the maid measuring the large doll with the sombre materials.

"But, mam'selle," said the nurse, "I make ze black for ze doll. Ze canary is dead!"

"Canary dead, all deaded!" chimed in Etta's



sweet baby voice, "an' Jeannette is doin' to put all 'e dollies in black, same as Etta!"

Miss Westbrooke stood aghast. In her quiet country life she had heard of fashionable follies, and in the few short weeks she had spent in her brother's house, had seen many things that surprised and grieved her; but the hideous mockery of this nursery mourning was like a blow to her sensitive nature. "Etta darling," she said quickly, "dollies do not know or feel, dear! Tell Jeannette to put away all that crape and black, and dress your beautiful dolly as she was dressed before."

"But my canary is dead!" persisted Etta. "And Daisy Martin's dollies all weared black dresses when her poodle doggie died."

"It's just awful," said Margaret, "that's what it is, ma'am. I'm not here long, only seven months, but what's spent in this nursery would keep two families in food and clothes. I'm not saying I'd take a child's toys away; but to go and buy the best of crape and bombazine to put mourning on a doll is downright sinful, to my thinking."

"And to mine," said Miss Westbrooke gravely, "I must insist upon your putting those things away, Jeannette; and say no more, if you please to Etta, about changing her doll's dress."



"May I put on her dewlry then?" asked Etta.

"Yes, dear!"

"Where is it, Jeannette?" the child asked.

Jeannette, not altogether sorry to put by her work, took from a small locked box a set of jewelry, tiny and exquisite, and handed it to Miss Westbrooke.

"Mees Etta might might break ze clasps," she said; "and Mrs. Westbrooke have said to me, she not to touch ze jewels herself."

"They are not real?" cried Miss Westbrooke.

"Yes, ma'am," said Margaret, "Miss Etta's papa had them made to order for the large doll on Christmas. Pure gold and real stones! That dollie's trunk of clothes and jewel case cost hundreds of dollars."

"Tum an' see," said Etta, pulling her aunt to a small trunk which she opened. It was full of dolls' clothing of expensive materials, beautifully made, and the wardrobe comprised every article used by a lady of fashion, in miniature. Tiny fans, scent bottles, embroidered handkerchiefs, kid gloves, every detail for most elaborate toilets for morning, dinner, walking, and ball dresses, lay before Miss Westbrooke's eyes. "Are you very fond of playing with your doll?" she asked Etta.



"Tan't pay wiv her. Beak her all to pieces!" was the reply. "Jeannette dresses her, and puts her to bed an' all'e fings. Etta holds her vewy tarefully!"

Miss Westbrooke thought of the rag-baby that had been her chief toy more than fifty years before, of the care she had bestowed upon its one calico dress, of the nights she had cuddled it in her arms to sleep, of the love she had given to it, and was sorry for this baby, whose splendid playthings could only be handled by a French maid, and touched by their owner very carefully. Delighted to display her treasures, Etta led her aunt to her cabinet of toys, to show her the costly array, more or less damaged, but all of the most expensive kind. And yet it was evident that the little golden-haired child found little real pleasure in her miniature bazaar.

"You see, ma'am," Margaret said, "Miss Etta is not allowed to touch the mechanical toys, and she does not care for the tea-sets and furniture sets when she is alone. Her mamma let her have a party sometimes, and the little ladies had tea in the nursery out of the cups and saucers. But, bless you, they turn up their noses at nurseries after they are six years old, and are dancing in drawing-rooms



like grown people, all tricked out in finery. We had a doll's party last winter, and the dolls were dressed like ladies and gentlemen, real jewelry, real lace and all. Miss Etta's doll was one of the handsomest, I will say, and Jeannette was one entire week making and trimming the dress. The Honiton lace on it cost no trifle, and yet children are starving in garrets in this very city!"

Jeannette gave her shoulders a shrug, as she always did when Margaret expressed her opinion of the luxuries of the nursery, and Etta looked up with a puzzled face, wondering if she was being scolded.

Miss Westbrooke made no comment, unwilling to seem to censure her sister-in-law to her servants, and yet feeling shocked at the waste around her: useless waste, for Etta herself evidently found no real pleasure in the possession of so-called play-things too costly to play with, and dolls' dresses whose value was entirely beyond her baby comprehension.

"Etta's weal dolly, all booful, Margaret frowned away," she said presently.

"A dead mouse, ma'am, that she found in the closet, and pinned up in a pocket handkerchief. She nursed it all one morning, but I had to throw it away."



"Poor child," said Miss Westbrooke, smiling. "I should like to have her in the country with me, to pet the little chickens and kittens."

"Oh," said Etta, drawing close to her aunt.

"Shall I tell you about them? Come sit on my lap," said her aunt, taking her up very lovingly.

Then she told the little one of her country home, of the flowers in the garden, the fruits on bushes and trees, the little downy chickens, and great hens, the gray cat and four little kitties. And the child listened with delight, often asking eager questions, and quite willing to leave all her toys to listen to the sweet voice.

"Do you like stories, Etta?" Miss Westbrooke asked.

"Do n't know," was the reply.

"Shall I tell you one?"

"'Ess," was the quick and very emphatic answer. "Etta likes to hear 'oo talk."

"Do you, dear?"

"'Ess, and Etta likes to sit in 'oo lap, 'cause 'oo a' n't 'fwaid of bein' mussed as Jeannette is, and 'oo a' n't too busy, as Margaret is, and 'oo a' n't dot shiny fings to be broked if 'ittle dirls touch."

Loving arms clasped the child close, loving lips pressed her baby face, and Miss Westbrooke's eyes



were dim as she lifted her heart in silent prayer for this little one, whose childhood was deprived of childhood's sweetest privilege, a mother's caresses, a mother's true love. No French dolls, no costly toys, could give little Etta the perfect happiness she felt as she nestled in her aunt's arms, and knew the pleasure of a loving embrace.

Margaret went down stairs to see about some fine ironing on Etta's dresses. Jeannette, seeing the child cared for, went to her own room, to devote an hour or two to her own sewing, and in the quiet room Miss Westbrooke told Etta simple stories suited to her comprehension, about little girls and boys.

Presently she was interrupted, the child sitting erect upon her knee, to ask, "But, auntie, what did Mawy pway for?"

"To ask God to take care of her, and make her be good."

Still the child looked puzzled.

"Do n't you ask Jesus to love you and keep you, and to make you a good girl, Etta?"

"No. Margaret took Etta to church one day, and a man in a high box talked, and Margaret said he was saying pwayers. Do 'ittle dirls like me dit in high boxes and talk?"



"No, darling," said Miss Westbrooke wondering if missionary work was not as much needed in that luxurious home in a Christian city, as in Africa itself. "No, darling, little girls do not pray aloud in a pulpit, but every little girl may kneel down in her own room and ask Jesus to bless her."

"Ask Jesus to bless her?" repeated the child imitating her aunt's grave tone.

"Shall auntie tell you about Jesus who loves little children?" asked Miss Westbrooke.

"'Ess."

And then, as all children will, Etta listened with deep pleasure to the beautiful story of the nativity; the story children never tire of hearing, of that tender Saviour who took little children in his arms and blessed them. The questions Etta asked proved how entirely new the lovely narrative was to her, how utterly ignorant she was of all Christian teaching: and yet her sweet, serious face, her evident interest proved as well that her aunt had succeeded in suiting her words perfectly to the child's comprehension.

The afternoon was over, and the twilight of a late spring day had set in, when Miss Westbrooke, putting the child down, after teaching her a short simple prayer, called Margaret to dress her for dinner.



The nurse was surprised to hear that Etta was to be allowed to sit at the table, but well pleased at the prospect of loving care being extended to her.

“For indeed, ma’am, the fine ironing and the plain sewing keep me busy, and Jeannette has all the dressmaking and hat-trimming to do, when she is not walking with Miss Etta. And the child’s troublesome, because she’s lonesome. I’m glad to hear you are going to stay, ma’am.”

“I shall stay for the present,” said Miss Westbrooke, “and I will get Etta some patchwork to teach her to sew, and a doll she can dress herself, to amuse her. The toys can stay as they are to look at, but I will give my little niece something to play with, and some trifling work to do. She will be happier if she is employed.”

Margaret, who was a well-meaning Christian woman, but afraid to interfere with the rules of the nursery, listened to the lisping, but reverent version Etta gave her of the holy story that had sunk deep into her baby mind.

“And Margy,” the child said, “Jesus is way up in ’e booful sky, and he can hear if Etta asks him to take dood care of her and make her a dood dirl.”

“Yes, deary, he can hear.”



"And he loves 'ittle dirls. And he tooked 'em in his arms to love 'em, same as auntie tooked Etta. A' n't auntie nice, Margy?"

"Very nice, such aunties as yours."

"I love her. I love her better 'n all 'e fings in 'e cabinet or dollies or anyfing. And she's doin' to have Etta to bekfus and dinner wiv papa and brover Hawwy. And I'm doin' to tell Hawwy, my hair 's all curled, and my dress on."

In the meantime, Miss Westbrooke, in her own room, was kneeling in fervent prayer for guidance and strength in the duties before her, which she approached with trembling, knowing that her own strength was far too feeble to meet them.

Younger than her brother, she was but a child when he left his country home to seek his fortune in the great city. As years rolled by she heard of his prosperity, but saw him very seldom, once at the funeral of their mother, once before his marriage when she made him a brief visit. Her own duties as teacher in a district school, kept her at home; and after her brother's marriage she was shy of meeting his fashionable wife, being herself no longer young, and knowing nothing of the life of the wealthy in the great metropolis.

She had gratefully accepted her brother's gift



of a sum trifling to him, but affording her an income more than sufficient for her simple wants ; and she had given up her school, and lived her quiet useful life upon the farm her father had left her, thinking of no change, until the letter came announcing Mrs. Westbrooke's dangerous illness, and begging her to come to the city.

It had given her deep pleasure, that in the hour of sorrow, almost the first deep grief of his prosperous life, her brother had turned to her for help and comfort, and she answered the call at once. It was touching to see how the old man met her, with the old boy love reviving in his heart, and with a strange sense of dependence upon her quiet good judgment and grave nature.

"You will know just what to do, Ellen," he said, "and I can leave Louisa in your care with an easy mind. I cannot trust her entirely to hired nurses, and she has no near relatives."

Later, when all care failed to keep away the angel of death, when, all unconscious of her danger, Louisa Westbrooke passed away, the bereaved husband clung still more closely to his only sister.

"Do not leave us," he pleaded ; "the farm is in good hands, you say."

"Yes, David and Mary have lived with me so



many years, they know exactly what to do. I am not uneasy about the farm. But, Henry, I know nothing of the control of such a house as this."

"Mrs. White understands her business; Louisa had no care of the housekeeping. But I need you, Ellen, and the children want some one to take their mother's place. I have lost so many little ones, sister, that these two are doubly dear to me. But I am a busy man, having little time from my work, and have left the control of domestic matters entirely to Louisa. So I leave it to you. Make any changes that you think best, but I beg of you be a mother to my children."

Miss Westbrooke, conscientiously striving to fill this new position faithfully, found children, who, even while having a mother, were already orphaned, their father devoted to money-making, their mother but a name. And when death claimed her, she left no void that the maiden aunt could fill. She could never wear gay ball dresses, dance half the night, sleep half the day, pay ceremonious calls, preside at stately dinners, give weekly receptions; but she could, she hoped, win the love of these young hearts confided to her care, lead them to a higher view of duty and to a nobler life.



## CHAPTER III.

*A DESECRATED SABBATH.*

THE funeral services for Mrs. Westbrooke had taken place on Wednesday, and the routine of life was taken up by the older members of the household the next morning, as usual. Mr. Westbrooke went to his office, having given baby Etta a most loving caress after breakfast, which she related to Margaret thus :

“Dess papa’s doing to love Etta too, same as auntie ; ’cause he kissed me two times hard.”

Harry with his books went to the academy, and Miss Westbrooke took Etta to her own room to delight her heart by the possession of a small work-box and some patches of gay chintz to be sewed together. It was a pretty sight to see the earnest little face, gravely puckered lips, and strained fingers over the new task, and the morning passed without one of the fits of screaming and crying that were of hourly occurrence in the nursery.

The remainder of the week passed quietly, a new experience being given both to Harry and Etta, the former being taken into closer compan-



ionship with his father, the latter being her aunt's charge and pleasure.

Sunday morning, a clear, cloudless day in May, found the small family assembled at breakfast, rather later than usual, business and school not requiring haste from Mr. Westbrooke and his son. They chatted pleasantly till the meal was over, when Miss Westbrooke rising from the table, asked,

"Where do you usually attend church, Henry?"

"I—well really, Ellen, I seldom go. I usually give Sunday morning to such correspondence as is not pressing. I believe Louisa went to the church whose spire you see from your window, where we were married—in fact, Grace Church."

Deeply pained, but mindful of the children's presence, Miss Westbrooke said:

"You will go with me, I hope, Harry."

"Thank you," was the reply, in tones of the most perfect courtesy, "I should like to do so, but I have made another engagement."

Mr. Westbrooke had left the diningroom, after answering his sister, Etta dancing along beside him to the staircase, on her way to the nursery, so that Miss Westbrooke was alone with her nephew.

"Do you think, Harry," she said gently and gravely, "that any engagement should make you



neglect so important a duty, as the weekly service of devotion to your Creator?"

Harry looked a little surprised, but said, "Oh, you must not think we are all heathens, Aunt Ellen. Of course we go to church, as everybody else does who is respectable. But I really have made an important engagement to-day. Walter Meredith is going over some of my books with me, and being in a higher class he can give me very material assistance. So you see I shall not be wasting my time."

"But breaking the Lord's especial commandment, 'Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work.'"

Harry made an impatient movement, but no reply, having a gentlemanly sense of the respect due to an elderly lady and his father's sister, but inwardly rebelling a little at being "preached to."

"Had you not better break your engagement?" Miss Westbrooke asked, putting her gentle hand lovingly upon her nephew's shoulder.

"I really could not, auntie. Walter will come here by my express invitation, and it would be positive rudeness for me to be out."

Then to avoid further urging, Harry also left the room, knowing little of the heart-sinking he



left behind him, the yearning prayer that followed his careless steps.

"I hope auntie is n't to be everlastingly preaching at a fellow," he thought, as he arranged his books and papers; "I like her now first-rate; but if she's going to quote Scripture at me, I shall keep out of her way. Time enough for that, when a man's gray and old!"

Then like a knife-thrust came the thought of his mother, neither gray nor old, stricken down so suddenly, gone from such bright, beautiful life, to the grave. She went to church sometimes he knew, but it was more frequently after the purchase of some new and expensive dress than at any other time. In fact church-going was by no means the rule in the house; the horses were overworked or had been out late; the ball had caused sleepiness; the day was cloudy, threatening destruction to finery; excuses even more trivial were of weekly recurrence. Mr. Westbrooke never attended divine service, writing all the morning, generally sleeping in the afternoon; and Harry went with his mother or not, as suited him best, regularity being difficult to exact in children, with their parents' example to the contrary ever before them.

The books and papers were forgotten for a time,



as the lad thought more deeply of his aunt's words. Were they all indeed Sabbath-breakers, not from any stress of necessity, not from any pressure of temptation, not from any emergency, but habitually, carelessly disregarding of one of God's own especial commands!

It was not often that Harry Westbrooke gave any thought to religious matters. His many and costly gifts from both parents had never included a Bible, and he knew but little of its holy teachings. He had never been required to attend Sunday-school, and church-going was a rather tedious way to display a new suit.

"I wonder if it is really wrong to study on Sunday," he thought, shifting his books about. "I always learned Monday's lessons on Sunday evening, and nobody found any fault. Nobody ever did find much fault with me;" and the boy drew himself up proudly, not aware that the praise he had received was far more due to the over-indulgence of his elders, than to his own merits.

"Father never goes to church," he thought presently; "he works on Sunday, as well as week days, so it can't be very wicked! I wonder if aunt will try to convert him."

A little laugh ended this thought, but there



was no mirth in it. For the first time in his life, Harry Westbrooke doubted whether his father's example was his surest guide. He knew well that the acquisition of wealth had been the leading motive of his father's whole life, and his life had certainly been a worldly success. But was there not something higher for which to live, something his aunt Ellen seemed to live for? The sweetness and quiet dignity of Miss Westbrooke had made a great impression upon her nephew's mind. He had often heard his mother speak rather slightingly of his aunt, as a poor maiden woman living on a farm, probably drudging her life out in the midst of pigs and poultry; and he had pictured to himself a coarse, ignorant woman, such as he had seen peddling vegetables in the city streets, red-faced and vulgar, with high voice and total disregard of all grammatical rules.

Instead, he saw a tall, slender lady, with a lovely face, soft gray hair covered with a lace cap, mild blue eyes, and the sweetest voice he had ever heard. In manner she was dignified, but very gentle, and vulgarity or ignorance could never be associated with her name, after once her voice had been heard, or her manner criticised, for in every action, every expression, there was a mild serenity,



that Harry felt instinctively was born of a higher peace of mind than mere worldly prosperity could give.

While he thought, his friend came in, a lad of nineteen, another fashionable youth, but one whose education had thrown him more into the world than Harry's had done. He was fond as his young friend of study, but he had advanced more rapidly and would enter college in a few more months. Orphaned while but a babe, he had been in boarding-schools until at nineteen he came to the Academy in New York, boarding in a stylish establishment, liberally supplied with pocket-money by the guardians who had the care of his fortune.

"What are you dreaming about?" he said. "Your door was not quite closed, so I could see your doleful face as I came up the stairs."

Harry blushed, half ashamed of his serious thought being brought before his companion's bantering tongue.

"I was thinking of serious matters," he said, however, "*apropos* of a little sermon on Sabbath-breaking I heard this morning."

"Aunt?"

Harry nodded.

"I thought so. I saw her yesterday, and made



up my mind she was one of the canting kind. I know them! The last boarding-school I went to we had religion for every meal, a double dose on Sunday. Scripture reading every morning, till it's a wonder we were not a collection of saints. Bah! *Vive la bagatelle.* Time enough to be solemn, I say, when youth has had her hour."

Where had Harry heard the words that came into his heart instantly, as if in answer to his companion's sneers? "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

He did not answer, and Walter continued:

"What were youth, health, good spirits, given to us for, if not to enjoy life? It is lovely to-day, the sky perfectly cloudless and the air soft and warm. I don't propose to waste it in a stuffy church, listening to a prosy preacher, droning away for an hour or two. No, sir. We will get over that hitch of yours in a few minutes and then take a drive. I've ordered a trap for Central Park, and I propose to show some of our friends how to handle the ribbons. You'll come?"

"Certainly," said Harry, already forgetting his stirring of conscience, as he listened to Walter's cheery voice, ringing with excitement. "Shall I ride, or will your trap seat two?"



"Oh drive with me. We can ride next week. I am going to show you a little life. You see," said Walter, settling back in a comfortable chair, and clasping his hands behind his head, "I've been rather slow about making friends at the Academy, for between ourselves, there are a good many *parvenu* fellows there, ready enough to imitate good style, but showing a youth of low associations. You understand."

"I do," said Harry, swallowing the implied flattery.

"Shoddy, you know. I'm rather old myself to be there, but my tender guardians insisted on my being a school-boy for an unreasonable time, and as they held the purse-strings, I could only submit. They flatter themselves that I will finish the college course, but I am of age in two years, and then—" a shrug left the future to be imagined.

"But I should hate to leave a college course unfinished," said Harry.

"Pshaw! I mean to travel, to see life abroad, to study what I will and when I will. I think I have brains enough to get what good college will do me in two years. At any rate when I am of age I'll submit no longer to dictation. Now, old fellow, show me your difficulty."



Half an hour passed in examination of school-books, and Walter good naturedly explained the passages that were puzzling Harry. Then, arrayed in faultless spring costume, with his mourning-studs and crape hat-band proclaiming his recent loss, Harry sallied forth, arm in arm with his more gayly-attired friend, to meet the carriage.

It was a perfect day, and the roads to the Park were filled with vehicles, more or less stylish, containing pleasure-seekers. Walter drove well, in a bold, showy manner, and his turnout was unexceptionable. Harry, exhilarated by the soft spring air and the rapid motion, had soon thrown all his scruples to the winds. But the lad, although indulged in all extravagant desires, and left in perfect freedom so far as his expenses were concerned, had been kept in restraint to a great extent by love of books and a desire to excel in his studies. His pleasures had consisted of evenings spent at the opera beside his mother, or assisting her in the entertainment of her friends, but he had made no intimate friends excepting among his school companions whose ambitions and pursuits were the same as his own. From all vulgar vice he shrank instinctively, and his introduction to vice under the garb of refinement had not commenced.



He saw no harm in driving to the door of a stylish-looking restaurant, and entering, calling for dinner and wine. The drive had been a long one, and they had met many acquaintances, so it was late in the afternoon when the lads, with sharpened appetites, sat down to a luxurious dinner.

"Try that," Walter said, pushing the bottle he had just ordered to his companion. "I can answer for its being good. They know better than to bring me poor wine here," he added, unconscious of the sneering smile the waiter behind him concealed from the table by a flourish of his napkin, but which was plainly visible to the other white-aproned men near him.

Rather poorly imitating the airs of a connoisseur in wine, Harry poured out a glass, held it up to the light, and swallowed it. Not altogether a new experience, but one glass, at his father's table, had been before the limit of the lad's indulgence.

"Good, is it?" asked Walter. "I thought so. Let me fill your glass again." And with a false shame at being thought boyish Harry permitted the wine to be passed to him again and again, till his face was flushed and his brain dizzy.

"I'll be all right when I am in the air," he thought; "the room is close and hot."



But in the air the dizzy nausea increased, and he reeled against Walter, who laughingly assisted him to his seat, and sprang up beside him.

"You'll spend the evening with me," he said tossing the reins to the man waiting at the door of the boarding-house, "I've invited two fellows to meet you, first-rate fellows too."

The drive had somewhat restored Harry's reeling brain, and he followed Walter steadily enough up the stairs, to his handsome room. The friends arrived later, and after some chat Harry was shocked to see cards produced for "a friendly rubber."

"No gambling," Walter said, "only a rubber to pass the time."

"But on Sunday."

"Pshaw! Don't be a Puritan at seventeen. You play."

"Not well. I never cared for cards."

"But you'll not be ill-natured and spoil the game. There are just four of us. Jack, if you'll open that closet behind you, you'll find a decanter and glasses."

"And we'll play for dollar stakes, just to make it lively," said Jack, producing the decanter.

It was past midnight when Miss Westbrooke, awakened from sleep by stumbling steps near her



door, heard Harry go into his room, and feared he was ill. She rose hastily, threw on slippers and wrapper, and knocked at her nephew's door.

"Who's there?" he asked, in a thick voice.

"Are you ill, dear?"

"No, I'm all right."

But the voice told even Aunt Ellen's inexperience in such sounds the humiliating truth, and there was no more sleep for her, as full of sorrow she prayed for the lad whose feet were entering upon such dangerous paths.

"Help me, O Heavenly Father," she prayed, "to save him from sin and drunkenness. Grant me, in thy mercy, strength to guide and save him."



## CHAPTER IV.

*RESOLUTION AND TEMPTATION.*

THE sound of the dressing-bell on Monday morning roused Harry from a deep slumber, and he sat up bewildered, wondering vaguely what had happened to make his head so hot and dizzy, and give him such a deathly sickness in his stomach. It seemed as if weeks had passed since he left the room the previous day, with Walter Meredith.

While he sat stupidly trying to collect his ideas, his eyes fell upon the books waiting for his hand and brain at the usual school hour, and memory struggled back to him. What was it he had learned the day before that was to carry him triumphantly to the head of his class? What explanation was it that had seemed so clear to him when he closed the book, and was so dim and confused in his mind now?

Then, following the train of thought awakened by the recollection of Walter's call, he knew what was the degrading cause of his unpleasant sensations. He, Harry Westbrooke, who, boy as he was, had prided himself upon being a gentleman,



had been intoxicated! It was useless to argue with himself that gentlemen were often overcome with wine. He knew the degradation was the same, whether a ragged street ruffian staggered to the stationhouse in the hands of the policeman, or a well-dressed man of wealth was carried home in his own carriage and cared for by well-paid servants.

There was no compunction of conscience for having broken one of God's express commands, and desecrated his holy day, but a humiliating shame that he had lowered himself from his own standard of refinement.

"That shall not happen again," he thought; "who could have imagined a few glasses of wine could have so lowered me! And did not Aunt Ellen come to my door? Did she know, I wonder?"

A light tap at the door seemed to answer this question, for a pleasant voice asked, immediately after,

"May I come in, Harry?"

"Yes," was the answer, though Harry wished he could escape the reproach he felt was coming.

"I have a cup of hot tea for you," Miss Westbrook said, coming to the bedside.

Harry's lip quivered, and his eyes filled, as a



gentle, cool hand softly touched his hot head, and in quick shame and penitence, he said,

“Aunt Ellen, I am ashamed to look at you. But it is the first time I have ever taken too much wine, and it shall be the last.”

The gentle caressing hand trembled a little, and a hot tear fell from Miss Westbrooke's eyes upon Harry's face.

“Don't, please don't,” he cried, completely overcome by this proof of tender sympathy. “It is not worth such sorrow from you.”

“Harry,” his aunt said, tenderly, “will you not let me take a mother's place in your love and confidence? You say this is the first time you have been overcome by wine, but the wrong began before the wine was tasted.”

“You think I was wrong to go to drive instead of going to church?”

“Was it right?”

“Perhaps not; but you see, Auntie, we were never a church-going family.”

“You are old enough now, Harry, to go from higher motives than merely following the example of others. If you have not been trained to worship and devotion to your Maker, you are now sufficiently matured to seek the right path, and follow it.



You say you will not fall again as you fell last evening. Dear boy, your own strength will never keep you from yielding to temptation. You have sinned against God. There is but one way out of sin, Harry, either past or future. We can not obliterate the past by excuses, or fortify ourselves against future wrong-doing by mere good resolutions. The Bible way is simple; we must confess and forsake it. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Faith in Christ our divine Redeemer and Saviour is the only remedy for sin. Look to Jesus, Harry, in earnest prayer, and his grace will be given you. I will not stay now, for it is time you were up, but leave you to ask for help where it is never denied." A loving kiss was pressed upon Harry's lips, and Miss Westbrooke left the room. The lad rose at once, bathed his head and face in cold water, drank the tea, and dressed hastily, longing for fresh air to scatter what dizziness still remained in his head. As soon as he was dressed he opened his windows wide, breathing in the cool, fresh morning air with keen pleasure.

"Something like myself again," he thought after a few minutes. "I wonder if I can remember what Walter explained yesterday. Let me see—



here are my notes. Ten minutes before breakfast-time. I'll go over this once more."

Sitting down, Harry was opening his book when his aunt's last words came back to his mind. "Prayer," he thought, "Aunt Ellen believes that prayer will keep me from temptation. But there is no great temptation to me in drinking wine. I was only ignorant of its effect upon me. There is no danger of my indulging in that vice. And the Sabbath-breaking! I suppose, as she says, I am old enough to do what is right, whether I have an example set me or not. Dear me, what a bother anyhow. I like Aunt Ellen, but it was more comfortable before she came to set a fellow thinking." Yet the thinking or stirring of conscience once commenced would not be pushed aside. Harry Westbrooke's intellect was too active to allow the old apathy about religious matters to continue to exist, when once he had been roused to consider them. Without any direct teaching, he had read and heard enough of Scriptural commands in church and elsewhere, to have a certain familiarity with them, yet without the personal convictions they would carry to the heart of a boy led by a Christian parent. In some of the schools he had attended the exercises were commenced by Bible reading



followed by the Lord's Prayer, and Harry's voice had always been heard in repeating the words with the class, simply because it was proper for him to do so. But never in the seventeen years of his life had he uttered one heartfelt, fervent petition, and now Harry suddenly confronted the fact that he did not know how to pray. The words of the half-forgotten Lord's Prayer repeated at school came to his memory, and he wondered if saying those would really help him resist the temptations of the previous day.

Without opening the book before him, he bowed his head and whispered the words, pausing when the five of deepest significance at that moment, passed his lips. "Lead us not into temptation!" he whispered, and the words carried into his heart a fuller meaning than they had ever done before. More reverently than he had uttered them in all his life he whispered the remainder of the familiar prayer, and lifted his head just as the breakfast bell sounded.

"I ought to kneel to pray," he thought a moment later. "I will remember next time. Heigho! I am afraid I am a dreadful heathen!"

Before night the consequences of his ill-spent day were pressing still more heavily upon Harry.











A headache he could not shake off confused him, so that his lessons were imperfect, and his exercises far from reaching their usual standard of excellence. For the first time since entering the Academy, he had to step into a lower place in his class, and his mortification was increased by meeting Walter Meredith's eyes full of laughing significance.

When dismissed, Harry was hurrying home, keenly ashamed, when Walter's voice stopped him. "Hold on a minute," Walter cried, "what is your hurry?"

"Nothing!" Harry replied.

"Don't look so doleful! Are you sick?"

"My head aches badly."

"Not used to wine and late hours, eh?" was the bantering reply, creating a false shame in Harry's mind, as if his manliness was doubted. "Never mind! You'll soon get used to it. When I was at your age, I was a perfect baby; but now I can take my bottle with any man, and not feel the worse for it."

A poor boast, but it was made with an air of superiority, that made Harry's better judgment yield to the glamour of being thought manly. "Well," he said, with an uneasy laugh, "I suppose one requires to be seasoned. I should not care



however, to wake often with such a headache as I had this morning."

"Where are you going this evening?"

"Nowhere. I mean to try to regain the place I lost this morning."

The words were uttered in a resolute tone and with such steady eyes that Walter felt it would be useless to urge a different course. He was too much in sympathy with good scholarship to sneer at Harry's ambition, and really liking his new companion said,

"I'll come over then, for an hour, and if there is any hitch I'll help you!"

"Thanks!" said Harry quickly, "if you will go over the passages we studied yesterday, it will help me very much."

They parted then, their ways homeward leading through different streets. After luncheon, Harry went directly to his room, resolved to conquer the difficulties over which he had stumbled in the morning, and regain his lost position in his class. "Catch me running such a risk again," he muttered, "when I can graduate with all the honors in six months. Not I!"

He studied hard till dinner-time, and was so entirely self-absorbed through that meal, that he



was unaware of a cloud upon his father's face, besides the one sorrow had so recently left there.

In the evening Walter Meredith kept his promise of assistance, and an hour of diligent study quite revived Harry's spirits. "I am sure of the Latin prize again," he said in exultation, "and pretty safe on geometry. Those are the worst of my studies ; all the others are easy enough. French, I like, and I do not begin German yet. Father thinks one modern language at a time is sufficient, and I agree with him. I keep my conversational French up with novels."

"A good plan ! I read that way myself."

"What is there new ?"

"A tiptop thing."

Then followed an animated description of one of the specimens of modern French literature that would have made Aunt Ellen shudder.

"You see," Walter Meredith said, "I've been kept in leading strings so long, that I am really far behind fellows of my age who have lived in New York. I think I manage to hide my deficiencies pretty well, but these country schools keep one back awfully. Why, I was a regular muff, when I came here, went to church every Sunday, said my prayers like a good boy, and got well laughed



at by my guardian's two sons before I was here a week. They are regular swells, you know, older than I am, and I don't care much for their society, because they put on so many airs, as if living in the city made them look down upon everybody who had not been brought up there. When it comes to money, you know, I shall have enough to buy and sell both of them; but they are more *au fait* than I am yet. But I'm learning something every day."

"And," said Harry, hesitating a little over the words, "they laughed at you for going to church?"

"The way I went! Of course they go sometimes, to meet lady friends or escort their mother. But I, bless you, went because all my strait-laced teachers persuaded me that I was on the high road to destruction if I stayed at home. You weren't brought up with those old-fogy notions, and I have had some tutors that turned up their noses at it all, but did not dare let the principals see them. It would have cost them their situations if I had told some of the sarcasms they uttered, but they knew they could trust me to hold my tongue."

Harry drank in all this poisonous assumption of independence with eager attention, and Walter continued:



"If there is a sneak on earth, it is one of your pious good boys, that roll up their eyes in horror over an oath, and are ready to faint if you suggest a friendly game of cards. I believe they are all a pack of hypocrites, and have their own little vices in plenty, only they manage to hide them. I despise cant!"

"Goodwin was one of that sort," said Harry, "trying to convert the whole academy. You know we used to open with Bible reading and a prayer."

"Yes?"

"Was it before you came? Yes, it must have been. Well, Mr. Huber found he could not give us the last explanations in geometry after the school increased so rapidly, and so he gave up the morning exercises, and commenced the regular routine of lessons at nine o'clock. Goodwin and some of the others put in a petition to open school as usual fifteen minutes earlier, and it was put to vote, and voted down. Then Goodwin's father took him away."

"Bah! All cant! I've known just such fellows, and I believe they're all ready enough to go back on their cant, if they can only do it slyly."

What proof he had to support this theory Walter did not mention. He was a fine looking young



man, not so handsome as Harry but with a pleasant face, a genial voice and a courteous manner, and was just enough Harry's senior for the boy to feel flattered at being his chosen companion. His natural self-conceit had been encouraged by being kept in several schools of younger boys, long after he had passed by them in their studies, and become a hero among them by his easy acquisition of lessons readily mastered by his mental powers, but which were mountains of difficulty to younger brains. He was short and slender, really appearing younger than Harry who was well grown for his years. And yet, he was not deliberately trying to injure Harry. He liked him, and finding the broad road most enchanting wished his companion to share in all its pleasures, careless of the end so well hidden by pleasant devices.

With a father absorbed in business, a mother devoted to fashion, Harry had never had but one restriction in his choice of associates. Mrs. Westbrooke had insisted upon her son's companions being his social equals. While a child, playmates were only permitted to enter the house if they wore dainty suits and lived in fashionable localities. At school, he was most strictly forbidden to speak to any boys whose attire approached shabbiness, or



who were in outward appearance acquainted with poverty, and when he entered the academy his rules in this respect were self-formed upon the same basis. He could cut a shabby coat with an air of easy contempt rather astonishing for his years, and his dainty room was never polluted by the entrance of broken boots or well-worn hats. By his standard of measurement, Walter Meredith was an unexceptionable acquaintance. His family was good, his wealth would be large ; he patronized only the most fashionable tailors, and scorned a twice-worn neck-tie or pair of kids. His studs were diamond, his watch costly, and his manners were certainly polished, though his language was apt to be tinged by such slang as people of fashion permit.

Had Harry consulted father or mother, no fault would have been found with his latest intimate friend, and no objection was likely to be interposed by Miss Westbrooke, who could know nothing of the older boy's pernicious example, and who felt a natural reluctance to attempt the exercise of any actual authority in regard to her nephew.

But no one knew or guessed the new dangers opening to Harry's fascinated mind, in his resolve to emulate Walter in all those accomplishments he thought manly.



## CHAPTER V.

*MISS WESTBROOKE'S STANDARD.*

THE weeks sped by that carried Harry Westbrooke over the May and June days to the first of July and the semi-annual examination at the academy. Some of the exultant certainty of success in carrying off the most important prizes was dimmed in those summer weeks, and in their place was an uneasy doubt, but poorly covered by an assumption of manly contempt for school-boy honors.

“Of course a fellow wants to keep up with his class,” Walter Meredith had said in patronizing tones, “but who will care out of the school whether the prizes were gained by Harry Westbrooke or by Peter Smith. You will take larger views of life soon, Harry, for you are almost a man, and then you will smile at yourself for ever having worried so over your examination. So long as you are not a dunce, and know it, what do such honors as old Huber bestows amount to? Even in college you’ll find the stroke-oar of more importance in his class than the book-worm.”



And Harry tried to draw comfort for possible failure from this theory, for he was bitterly conscious of many falls from that standard of school excellence he had so long maintained. Walter Meredith was fond of social gatherings in his own room, where he could display his hospitality to those secretly-envied sons of his guardian, Jack and Will Raymond, and find points for careful imitation in their city-bred manners and habits. And that he might not be the only "youngster," in their contemptuous regard, he invited Harry as often as possible to make one of the party.

Their aristocratic feelings would probably have suffered a severe shock, had any low-bred person suggested to them that gambling and drunkenness were plain English names for their evening's amusements. Both names were low, and applicable only to vulgar people. They merely played friendly rubbers to pass the time; with trifling stakes to make the games interesting, and Walter took out his decanter and glasses because, being in a boardinghouse, he could not well offer any other refreshment in his own room.

Cigars, of only the choicest brands, usually accompanied the wine, and Harry, after a fierce war with his stomach, finally conquered the nausea that



followed his introduction to tobacco, and puffed away with the others.

More than once his unsteady steps awoke Miss Westbrooke ; but she found her gentle advice unheeded, or making but a momentary impression, soon effaced by an hour's conversation with Walter.

At first, each evening's dissipation was followed by deep shame and resolves to break away from temptation in the morning, but the next interview with the bantering trio, who were becoming Harry's only associates, scattered shame and good resolutions to the wind, and again the sin and regret were repeated, till the sense of guilt was dulled, and the pleasures became habitual.

Pocket-money was easily renewed, and if Harry lost a considerable sum in "trifling stakes" one evening, he as often gained the same, for there was no cheating in these gentlemanly games, and his luck was as apt to be in the ascendant as that of his companions. Cigars were an item of expense too trifling to be considered, and if an occasional restaurant-supper returned some of the hospitalities of his companions, Harry was sure his indulgent father would never dispute the bill.

But, with the examination only two days distant,



Harry Westbrooke shook his head over two tempting invitations from Walter, and resolved to devote every hour to study until he went before the committee.

"I can soon catch up," he thought, resolving to resist every temptation to idleness, "and leave the Academy with flying colors."

But the resolution proved difficult to keep. Six weeks of careless skimming over his lessons before joining Walter for some party of pleasure, had not proved so successful in maintaining an honorable place in his classes as previous diligent application had done, and it was no easy task to supply all the deficiencies, hastily covered up, in two days of study, were it ever so conscientiously performed.

Difficulties easily conquered with a clear brain and steady hand, were found insurmountable with the mind clouded by restless nights, the brain weakened by stimulants, and the heart far away from the books. Thoughts of this or that scheme for "jolly" days or evenings would come between the student and his book, and he was not yet so "seasoned" to the use of wine, that his brain could shake off the effects of more than one night of over-indulgence in its use. Saturday and Sunday, when



the school was closed, Harry had resolved to give to preparation for Monday's examination, but Saturday evening found him already exhausted, his head throbbing with pain, his heart sick with discouragement.

He had given strict orders to the servants to deny him to all visitors, but his pale face and weary eyes at dinner-time roused all Miss Westbrooke's loving fears for his health.

Conscientiously she had persevered in her gentle efforts to win his love and confidence, though herself unaware of the giants she was fighting. He was so little at home, between his absence in school-hours, and his devotion to his new companions, that his aunt's opportunities to converse with him were very few. Twice she had persuaded him to accompany her to church, and no fault could be found with his perfect decorum in the sacred building. But the carelessness of years could not be overcome in a few weeks, and while she grieved, Miss Westbrooke was not discouraged.

Yet some gentle remonstrances she had made against late hours, some mild words of reproof for the stumbling feet, had been answered by Harry's bolting his door against morning visits, and an evident avoidance of private interviews. He was



not so hardened that the sweet voice and loving eyes failed to stir his conscience painfully, and so he sought a coward's remedy and avoided them.

It had the effect of making Miss Westbrooke shy of trying to influence her nephew against his will. At her age, suddenly brought from the quiet of her country home into the whirl and turmoil of the city, she was half bewildered at many things that seemed monstrous wrongs to her, but were quite habitual in her brother's family. It made her timid about offering advice to have it so frequently met by a civilly contemptuous comment upon old-fashioned or country ideas. And yet she held fast to her own principles, though unable to enforce their application in the lives of others.

The total absence of any act of family devotion troubled her deeply, yet she could not insist upon daily worship in her brother's house when he said,

"We will not start any new fashions, Ellen; I do not see the importance of family prayer, though I should never think of controlling the private devotions of any one."

"But Henry, your children—the servants."

"Oh! servants in the city do not expect to take part in family devotion, and would not like it at all.



And the children ; well, you see Harry is rather old to begin with, and Etta is a mere baby."

"Henry, your father never thought you were too young or too old for his prayers."

"Well, well, those were different times, Ellen. We were plain country people ; now it is different. I must go."

So the discussion ended, and Miss Westbrooke knew it would be useless to renew it. "Too old!" she thought, her brother's words recurring to her as she listened to his retreating footsteps—"too old at seventeen to begin a Christian life! Poor boy! His father's wealth cannot compensate him for the loss of a father's prayers!"

It made her very pitiful over Harry's faults, very slow to censure him, to know how little parental guidance he had had in his young life. That a boy of seventeen should have become so familiar with stimulants as to show their effects in stumbling feet and dizzy head, was a horror to her scarcely to be described. That he could converse with his father upon the merits of each new public exhibition as it attracted attention, troubled her deeply. But worse even than these was the light, careless way in which all religious topics or conversations were set aside, as too trifling for serious attention. Many nights



the old lady's pillow was wet with tears for brother and nephew; many dawns found her praying fervently for them after hours of sleeplessness.

On the Saturday evening when Harry, pale and dispirited, went to his own room after dinner, Miss Westbrooke hesitatingly, but unable to control her fears, followed him up stairs. Her gentle tap at the door was unheard, and pushing it open, she saw Harry sitting at a table covered with books and papers, his head bowed down, evidently suffering.

He started at her gentle touch upon his shoulder, and looked up with a faint smile.

"I've been trying to crowd six weeks' study into one day, Auntie," he said, "and I am tired out."

"I should think you would be. But is there any necessity for such overwork?"

"Monday and Tuesday are examination days at the Academy, and—well, I have been rather idle lately."

"What a pity," said Miss Westbrooke, "when you had earned those," and she looked at the handsomely-framed certificates of merit that had accompanied Harry's prizes.

"Yes, I was a regular drudge when I first went to the Academy; but I'm afraid I shall not add anything to that array on Monday."



"But you should have found such triumphs easier as you grew older."

"But—but a fellow has other engagements as he gets older, Auntie."

"None, I think, so important as his studies, has he, Harry? Very many boys would be more than thankful for your advantages. Your father had no more than the education of a district schoolboy, very imperfect in those days, when he began to earn his own living."

"I know that. He has often told me it is the sense of his own deficiencies that makes him so very anxious for me to be a good scholar. And yet, you see, Auntie, he has been a successful man."

"He has accumulated wealth, Harry."

There was a long silence after these few words. Harry understood perfectly the thought in his aunt's mind, that money was not the highest good to be won in life; but he did not sympathize with her as he imagined he did. After some moments of silence, he said, "Wealth is what the world values most highly, Auntie. A rich man is always considered a successful one."

"Very true—by those who make the acquisition of money their sole aim. But there are higher aims that I hope will guide your life."



"Intellectual aims? I agree with you there: I had rather be a great scholar than the richest man in New York. I have been ambitious, you see, and," he cried with sudden energy, "I will be again. I *will* resist the temptation to trifle away my time, and gain my old place in my classes. You shall see me a closer student after this, Auntie, and perhaps one day a great scholar."

"I had far rather see you aiming still higher, my dear boy."

"For political honors? Well, good scholarship is not a bad foundation for statesmanship."

"Still higher, dear Harry. I honor learning and reverence the great men of our government; but for you, I would set up a standard at once proud and lowly, costing deep struggle, gaining no worldly fame—a standard the most ignorant beggar may follow, before which the mightiest of this earth may bend in homage. Harry, rather than see you wealthy or famous, I would see you a Christian man. My boy, beyond all this life can offer, is the reward of faithful effort to resist evil, for Christ's sake."

"You would like me to be a great preacher."

"First a lowly preacher, a humble follower. I love you very dearly, Harry; but I had rather see



you poor, ignorant, even suffering, and holding fast to a firm faith in your Saviour, trusting utterly in his mercy, following humbly in his footsteps, than to see you occupying the proudest position earth can offer, careless of your soul's salvation."

The deep, loving earnestness of Miss Westbrooke's voice, the tenderness in her soft blue eyes, the caressing touch of her gentle hand, told how truly her heart was in her words; and Harry, whose nature was naturally affectionate and easily guided, was deeply touched.

"Your Bible tells you, Harry," she was saying, when he interrupted her, saying, half sadly, half smiling, 'But, Auntie, I have no Bible. I never read a page in the Bible in my life.'

"Oh, my boy," Miss Westbrooke said, her eyes filling with tears, "how can you overcome temptation without such help? It bewilders me, Harry, to think of a life spent in such careless disregard of your Creator. I do not wish to weary you by preaching to you; but I implore you, for your soul's sake, to try to learn the holy teachings you should have learned from your infancy. I am past sixty, and I cannot remember when Christ was not to me a familiar name, though my childish prayers were not the outpourings of my heart, as they became in



later years. But reverence and faith were taught me long before I could read. God calls us all, Harry, and he makes his voice heard at some time in our lives. Some turn to him in gratitude for great blessings; some hear him only when crushed by sore affliction. By some, alas, the death agony finds his call unheeded. I cannot tell you how terrible it seems to me, that in a Christian country, in a great city, where every advantage is presented on all sides, a boy of seventeen, reared in luxury, able to read, can say he never opens a Bible."

"Unfortunately from your point of view, Auntie, there are plenty to keep me in countenance."

"But now, to-day, Harry, will you not set this Christian standard up in your heart?"

Harry did not answer. He could not lightly speak as his aunt wished. A pledge given to her would be a binding one, and he was not prepared so to bind himself.

His own ambition was to excel in intellectual pursuits; his father had awakened a desire for the pursuit of greater wealth through business channels; his mother had made social importance, gentlemanly deportment, and a stylish appearance, the great aim; and now he was asked to let all these be secondary to a new object for which to live.



It was not strange that he hesitated. Miss Westbrooke partly understanding the cause of his silence, said gently,

“I will not urge too much at once, Harry ; but if I bring a Bible to you, will you read a little every day, for my sake now—soon, very soon, I hope, for the happiness and comfort it will bring you? In this blessed book you will find the way to a Christian life made plain. Jesus says, ‘ Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life ;’ but once in that way you will find it pleasantness, and its paths peace. The way seems dark now ; but ask for light, and you will surely receive it. Pray earnestly, daily, without ceasing, for the teaching and help of the Holy Spirit. You will find all other aims will be brighter to you, when once you can say you are one of Christ’s followers. All your joys will be doubled, your sorrows lessened, your temptations weakened. I will leave you now, for you ought to rest.”

She rose as she spoke, but her heart was full of gratitude, when Harry, rising also, put his arms around her neck, and kissing her, said in a low, trembling voice.

“I will try to do as you wish, Auntie.”

And it did not grieve her that his voice broke,



and he turned from her to hide a rush of tears, boyishly ashamed of his own emotion.

For some hours after, far into the night, he studied hard, not wholly discouraged, although full of bitter regret, for the lost time, he knew had been worse than wasted.

But when, next morning, Miss Westbrooke, leading Etta, came into the hall, dressed for church, her heart thrilled with joy to see Harry come from the library, hat in hand, to say,

“Will you take my arm, Auntie? You see,” with a pleasant smile, and almost in a whisper, “I want to see your standard in a clear light.”

And never was a more fervent prayer carried to the throne of grace than the one Miss Westbrooke offered that morning, that the heavenly light might guide Harry's heart and life.



## CHAPTER VI.

*TEMPTATION RESISTED.*

"WHAT's come over Westbrooke?" Jack Raymond asked, lolling back on of Walter Meredith's most luxurious chairs; "I've not seen him for a month."

"Oh, he's going in for all the Academy honors next time, and studying half of the day," was Walter's reply; "he's getting to be a regular muff, anyhow."

"Did n't come off very well at examination, did he?"

"Fair! Got two prizes; but he had set his heart on the whole I believe, and old Huber gave him rather a severe rap over the knuckles for falling back since the last examination. It mortified him dreadfully."

"Bah! With his father's wealth what will he care for that, in a few years? I rather like him—no nonsense about him."

"Well, I do n't know," said Walter slowly. "I said the same thing three months ago, but he's got some new crotchets in his head lately. I met him



in the Park yesterday; and, by the way, he's got as pretty a piece of horseflesh as I want to see; I joined him of course and we dined at a restaurant rather late. But he would n't touch the wine."

Jack burst out laughing.

"It was too funny to watch him getting drunk, Meredith. I knew exactly when he would get pathetic, and when merry. He is an innocent infant for a city boy, after all. Kept in the nursery too long in his tender youth. So he would not touch the wine?"

"Not one drop! He said he could not study with a headache, and could not take wine without incurring that penalty."

"H'm! Very devoted to study all at once."

"Not exactly that! He was always an ambitious scholar, but he is old enough now to see a little life, and I coaxed him from his books for awhile. But he is determined to make up for lost time during the vacation."

"You don't go back to Huber's."

"No, I'm off for Harvard next term, if I can't coax your father to send me to Europe instead. With a tutor of the right sort, one can have an enjoyable trip."

"I know the very man. He went over with Law-



son, and knows Paris and London as well as I do New York. He can keep up your study just enough to ease his conscience, but is a thorough good fellow."

"And your father? You see I've seen very little of him, and do n't know how he will take any change in his own plans."

"Oh he's easily talked over, too busy in his office to bother much outside of it. I'll start the proposition for you!"

"All right! Don't I hear Will's voice on the stairs? And—it is Harry Westbrooke! Right welcome," Walter added, grasping Harry's hand, "I was afraid you intended to desert us altogether."

Harry colored, for such had really been his intention, fearful of trusting his new resolutions in such an atmosphere of temptation. But he was spared the necessity of answering by Will Raymond, who said,

"You may thank me, now. I met Westbrooke taking a constitutional, and made him come with me. Isn't it hot?"

"Ring the bell for ice, Jack, will you?" said Walter; "the rope is just at your hand, so you need not rise. I've some tiptop claret cooling in the cellar."



"How is *hic, hac, hoc*, Harry?" said Jack, with a broad pronunciation of the syllables that made the name sound like a continuation of the same. But Harry laughed pleasantly.

"Not in flourishing health at last accounts," he answered, "but improving of late."

"Do you stay in town this summer?" Jack asked.

"Not decided. Father never leaves the city, and my aunt seems to think she must stay with him. Of course, I could go alone, but it is stupid."

"We're talking of a trip to the White Mountains! Six fellows have joined! You'd better come!"

"I'll ask father!" said Harry delighted at this prospect, "how long will you be gone?"

"A month or so, longer if we find it pleasant. Here comes your claret and ice, Walt."

The servant put the tray upon a table, and Walter filled the glasses already half full of cracked ice.

"You'd better," he said, as Harry shook his head; "there's not a headache in a barrel of it! And it is cooling in this awful weather."

"No, thank you," was the reply, with a little forced laugh, "my head and legs wont stand wine."



"They will after you get used to it," said Will Raymond, sipping the claret, "and claret is not intoxicating."

Harry was half inclined to yield. The drink looked deliciously tempting and cool, and he was heated with walking; the half-contemptuous smile upon the three faces near him was hard to bear, for he was young enough to be keenly sensitive to any ridicule; but he had promised his aunt Ellen to resist such invitations, and his promise was not lightly given, but was meant to be binding.

So, after one moment of hesitation he filled a glass from the pitcher of water, and drank that, saying, "I can drink your good health in this! Now," rather hastily, "tell me your plans for this White Mountains trip, Jack. You go, Walt?"

"Yes, Will, Jack, and I, started the plan, and Hope, Wiley, and Frankland, joined us. You had better do the same. The more the merrier."

"When do you start?"

"Tuesday week, so there is ample time to make up your mind."

An animated discussion of hours, route, and plans, followed, the whole programme sounding very inviting, with the additional charm of being undertaken by young men all sufficiently Harry's



seniors to make him feel flattered by their desire to include him in the party. Before he started for home, his whole heart was set upon gaining his father's consent to his going with the others.

It was only a little past ten o'clock when he opened the door of the sittingroom, to find Miss Westbrooke knitting beside a shaded light.

In the past four weeks, since the memorable examination day, Harry had sought his aunt's companionship with true pleasure. The boy heart, that had starved for mother love from infancy, was yet tender and affectionate, and the affection his aunt offered, novel as it was, was very precious.

Keenly sensitive to all impressions, Harry had been drawn very near his aunt by her unobtrusive sympathy when he was suffering the deepest mortification at his school failure and his teacher's reproach, and in his first burst of confidence had told Aunt Ellen the whole history of his temptations and failure.

It was a delicate matter to hold such confidence and so tenderly handle it, that there should be no after-regret for its bestowal; but Miss Westbrooke in simple love and genuine sympathy did so hold it. She urged no confession, she forced no confidence, but her earnest, sympathizing interest led



Harry on and on, to such revelations of his life, as made her only profoundly grateful he was not far worse in all respects than he was.

There seemed nothing of this earth to have saved him, but his own natural refinement and a love of study, for upon all sides were the pits and snares of wealth, over-indulgence, and a freedom from moral restraint, appalling to contemplate. Nurses and governesses, taking their tone from Mrs. Westbrooke, made appearances their only guide, refinement their only standard.

Well and wisely Miss Westbrooke repaid Harry's confidences, by such words of advice and love as would lead him to turn his heart to his Saviour. It was, therefore, upon a ground already familiar, that she listened to the glowing account of the summer trip in contemplation.

"No ladies, you see, Auntie, so we can leave all our fineries at home, and rough it in loose, easy dress. No dancing and scraping, such as we had at Saratoga and Long Branch, doing the pretty to mother's friends, but just a jolly tramp wherever we want to go! We can hire horses all along wherever we want to ride for a few stations, and we mean to charter some sort of a vehicle for our own exclusive use, once we are among the moun-



tains. But—" and the lad's face fell, "you do not approve of it?"

"Is my face such a tell-tale? Since you have so truly read its expression, Harry, I must admit I do not like the plan."

"Why not?"

"It brings you into a month's constant intercourse with three young men at least, whose influence has not, by your own description of it, been of benefit to you."

"But, Auntie, I am not such a baby that they can influence me against my better judgment."

"Have they never done so?"

"Not since—"

There Harry stopped. He had refused to drink wine with his friends an hour or two previous, but was ashamed, after this point was gained, to refuse a game of cards and a cigar. Thoroughly truthful, he hesitated, and then said,

"I drank nothing this evening; but I did not want to be too straitlaced, and I smoked and played. You see, Auntie, one cannot be too strict, when others are enjoying themselves."

"And so it is better to have associates whose enjoyments are not vices."

It was the harshest sentence Harry had ever



heard from his aunt's gentle lips; but she felt that the time had come to exert to its utmost whatever influence she might have gained.

"Harry," she said gravely, "ask yourself if you are strong enough to resist the temptations that will be offered you for an entire month, or to endure the ridicule that your refusals would bring upon you. You have told me of the loose conversation your companions indulge in, founded upon reading books that they must buy secretly and destroy quickly; of the half-atheistical theories the Raymonds advance after a perusal of the works of modern scientists; of the constant indulgence in cards, wine, and tobacco. If you hold fast to your standard, dear boy, the standard you tell me becomes clearer every day, you must separate yourself from your associates and bear their ridicule. If you join them in all their pursuits, your standard falls, for it will not stand unless held up by an upright hand and a pure heart."

"But, Aunt Ellen, we shall be travelling all the time! Surely I could keep away from the vices you fear, when we are in constant motion from place to place."

"If it were your *duty* to go, Harry, even in such company, I would say to you, Go, and the



Saviour will keep you and make you influential in leading others to a better life. But when you voluntarily and willingly place yourself in the way of constant intercourse with evil, knowing in your own conscience that it is evil, can you kneel and pray, 'Lead us not into temptation,' expecting your prayer to be answered?"

Again there was a long silence before Harry could answer this question. Prayer to him, coming as a new experience upon his advanced intelligence, was not a mere habitual repetition of a form of words, as it is to many who have had far more religious training than Harry Westbrooke.

He had faithfully kept his promise to his aunt; had read the Bible she placed upon his table, every day, kneeling afterwards to ask the blessing and guidance of God. And it would have been contrary to his nature to do either carelessly. The holy words of the New Testament had been freighted with deep significance to his heart, sincerely seeking a full knowledge of their teaching, and the petition given by Christ to his followers was not spoken thoughtlessly, and Harry now felt the full significance of his aunt's question.

Could he indeed pray to be delivered from evil, saved from temptation, when deliberately, with his



eyes wide open, he walked towards both? For a short month his religious aspirations had met hearty sympathy from his aunt, and the path of rectitude looked smooth and bright before him. His enthusiasm had led him to believe he could be strong for any sacrifice, to keep his standard erect and bright. And behold, at the first cross he faltered and looked longingly towards another goal.

It was a long time before he spoke, conscientiously weighing his aunt's question, even asking himself if the aim she had set before him was worth the sacrifices it demanded, and then, with quick shame remembering how much greater sacrifice had been made to give him the opportunity to follow in his Saviour's footsteps.

At last, with a deep sigh he said,

"It is hard to give it up, Auntie."

"But is it not *right*?"

"I wish I could say there was any doubt about it. But you make your case stand out so plain, that one cannot hide behind a doubt. I will take your advice, and not walk deliberately into temptation. I will write to Walter Meredith in the morning, and keep out of his way till he goes; for, even if it is boyish and silly, I do n't like to be laughed at."

"Older people than you are, Harry, are quite as



sensitive to ridicule, even if cased in triple armor of right and justice. But it is time we went up stairs. May God bless you, dear boy, and keep you strong in good resolutions. You have made me very happy to-night;" and a most loving kiss followed the words.



## CHAPTER VII.

*THE SORROWS OF A NURSERY.*

It was rather a silent party that assembled around the breakfast-table the next morning. Mr. Westbrooke for some weeks had been abstracted and gloomy, not only with the sadness that followed the death of his wife, but with some added burden that was evidently depressing him. There was not yet sufficient cordial sympathy between him and his sister, after so many years of separation, for her to venture upon any questions, and he offered no confidence.

With Harry, also, his communications had never been very free, the one absorbed in business, the other, a boy, kept quite apart from both parents through the first years of his life. After the one confidential conversation with his son on the day of Mrs. Westbrooke's funeral, Mr. Westbrook had resumed his natural reticence, and the lad made no effort to break through this customary state of affairs.

Upon the morning in question Harry himself was very quiet, the regret for his sacrifice strug-



gling with his self-approval of his resolution. He was but a boy after all, and one little accustomed to self-denial, and his inclination still leaned to the party of pleasure, although he would not have thought of breaking his word passed to his aunt.

But the voice that was most missed was not the grave accents of Mr. Westbrooke, his sister's sweet tones, or Harry's cheerful chat, but the silvery treble of Etta, which usually filled every interval of graver conversation. The child was deeply attached to her auntie, and always glad to be with her, while Mr. Westbrooke, with whom intercourse with a child was a new experience, gave a worshipping love to the golden-haired darling, and was happier in petting her than in any other hour of his busy, careworn existence.

But on this August morning, when the sultry air hung like a furnace-breath over the great city, little Etta sat very silent, scarcely tasting the food Miss Westbrooke put upon her plate, and drooping her pretty head in most unusual fashion. Not until her father rose from the table and bent over his little daughter for a farewell kiss, did he notice the child's pale cheeks and heavy eyes. Then very lovingly he said,

“Are you sick, darling?”



"Vewy sick!" the little one said, lifting her tiny hand pathetically to her head; "dot a bad pain in all my turls."

"A pain in your curls?"

"'Ess, and 'e bekfus do n't taste dood."

"She does not look well, Ellen," Mr. Westbrooke said quickly. "I will send Dr. Lewis over."

He lifted Etta from her high chair as he spoke, and after tenderly kissing her hot cheeks, put her in Miss Westbrooke's extended arms, where she nestled down in perfect content, her headache already soothed by the tender, caressing hand among her curls.

"Do you think she is really sick, Auntie?" Harry said, kneeling down to bring his face upon the same level as his little sister's.

"She is certainly feverish," said Miss Westbrooke, "but it may be the heat. You are not accustomed to remain in the city, are you?"

"No, we never have done so. Etta dear."

"'Ess, brover Hawwy," the child replied, putting out her little hand to the big brother who loved her very dearly, and towards whom she felt that idolizing attachment often seen in very young children towards older brothers or sisters.

"Does your head ache very badly, darling?"











“’Ess, all in Etta’s turls it ache, and she’s vewy hot.”

Miss Westbrooke was surprised to see how pale Harry grew, and how strong a fear sprang into his eyes; but presently he said in a choking voice, “My little brothers and sisters all drooped just so, Auntie. You know how many—” and there his voice failed entirely.

It brought back very vividly to Miss Westbrooke’s mind the letters that had brought her tidings of the loss of one and another of her brother’s children, and it touched her deeply as she for the first time realized what their loss must have been to this oldest child, deprived of his companions, one after the other, in those tender years when love was an instinct.

“I never had any one to talk to about them,” Harry said presently, seeing that Etta, soothed by her aunt’s caressing hand, had fallen asleep in her arms, “and nobody ever seemed to think I cared. My nurses always comforted me by telling me the playthings were all my own; and my mother never noticed me much after she had ordered a crape band for my hat. But it was dreadful. I loved them so much, even the tiny baby that I can scarcely remember, who was next to me and only lived nine



months. I used to hide in her cradle to cry, and beg her to come back again. We were lonesome in the nursery, because we were never allowed to make any noise, and I did not go to school till I was quite a big boy. I had one little brother, Charlie, and I was eight years old when he was born. We had not had a baby in the nursery for a long time, and when he came I could never tire of holding him and playing with him. He had long yellow curls like Etta's, but his eyes were brown. I did love him so much, and he was as fond of me. And just when he was the very sweetest, talking baby-talk and calling me 'brover Hawwy,' just as Etta does, he took scarlet-fever. I had it too, awfully, and when I was just getting well, they told me Charlie was dead. We had an old nurse then, Nancy, and I can remember how she grieved over my loneliness. She used to call me a 'poor little forlornity,' and I was forlorn enough. I know I used to cry, big boy as I was, to go to Greenwood and read the names on the gravestones, because I had a sort of hope that the other children knew I had not forgotten them, and loved them still. And I had not forgotten Charlie, but mourned with all my childish heart for him when Etta came. I was a big boy then, out of the nursery, and yet I used to spend hours



there just to hold her in my arms. She is so sweet, Auntie, and the only one left, and now—”

Never before had Harry sought sympathy for these griefs of his childhood, deeper because they were borne so silently; and all the pain seemed renewed when he looked at the flushed face of this baby sister, who had represented to him all the little ones, whose brief lives had been so precious to him, whose loss had been so deeply felt.

Miss Westbrooke had already been profoundly stirred by the starved affections of her young nephew. Domestic life in her brother's home had been so strangely cold and formal to her, that she had never dreamed of the existence of this child-love in the nursery, this yearning boy-heart reaching out towards the little ones whose short lives and early deaths had seemed but trifling episodes in their parents' existence.

“Harry dear,” she said, her own sweet voice trembling with emotion, “is it not better to think of those dear babes safe in a tender Saviour's arms, than exposed to all the temptations and trials of this life?”

“But no one told me that,” the boy answered, looking up. “I only thought of them lying in the cold grave, away from me.”



"But now, now that you can think of a loving Jesus, who calls little children to come to him, who loves them with deeper, purer love than ever filled a human heart, does it not make you feel nearer to heaven to know Charlie is there?"

"I don't know. I never thought of heaven as you do, Auntie; you seem almost to have been there, you are so sure of it. But I—I cannot realize that future life of which I have thought so little. I think it will break my heart if Etta dies."

"We will hope she is not so very ill as that, dear," was the tender reply. "It may be only a feverish attack, and she will be well again in a few days."

But Harry's fears were stronger than his hopes. The drooping of the babes he loved in the neglected nursery had left a vivid impression upon a heart that, having little to love, had loved that little with a concentrated affection beyond his years. More vividly than he had done since Etta was born, did he recall Charlie's fever-flushed face lying against the nurse's breast, the delirious fancies, the heavy stupor, and last of all the marble pallor, and the quiet no cries and tears of his could break.

He lifted Etta tenderly and carried her to his aunt's room, moving restlessly about while Miss



Westbrooke undressed the child and put her upon her own bed.

"Whether she is very ill, or only suffering from some childish ailment easily cured, we will not trust her to hired care, Harry," his aunt said lovingly. "You shall help nurse her, if you will, and you may trust me to give her all loving attention."

"I am sure of that," was the grateful reply. "You are surely our good angel, Auntie."

The doctor came early in the day, and looked very grave.

"The children all inherit a delicate constitution from their mother," he told Miss Westbrooke, "and a severe illness goes hard with them. Harry is the only one, as I suppose you know, who reached the fifth year."

"You think Etta dangerously ill?"

"No, but she has a high fever, and there is danger to the brain. My first prescription would be the sea-air. But I would not advise you to go far from home. I will speak to Mr. Westbrooke."

Leaving minute directions, the doctor promised to call again at the hour when Mr. Westbrooke came home to dinner, and left the house, not aware of the effect of his words upon Harry.

It was pitiful to see how he hung over the sick



child, watching every breath, stilling his steps and voice that he might not disturb her.

Far Rockaway was decided upon as the best place for a few weeks' sojourn, the sea-air being attainable, while it would be easy to summon Mr. Westbrooke or the doctor in case of necessity. Before night the father had telegraphed to the hotel, engaged front rooms, and made arrangements for removal the next day. Harry was to go with his aunt and sister, and was proud of his father's few but emphatic words at parting.

"You must take my place, my son," Mr. Westbrooke said, "for I cannot leave my business even for a day, at present. But you can see that your aunt is comfortable, and that your sister has all she requires. You are such a manly boy that I do not feel any hesitation in trusting them to your care, nor—" and the father's voice faltered, "in leaving it to your judgment to send for me, if you think there is any greater danger. We have had many sore partings, Harry!"

And Harry feeling nearer his father in those few words, than he had ever done in his life before, could only say, "You may trust me, father!" and accepted the charge laid upon him, with an earnest wish to do his duty faithfully.



It was a very drooping child that lay in Aunt Ellen's arms in the open barouche that drove to the Rockaway boat, and took a place upon the lower deck there. But even before the destination of the small party was reached, the bracing sea-air had revived the little invalid. She sat up, and looked languidly at the water, glittering in the bright sunlight, and laughed gleefully at Harry's promises of scampers by the seaside, and treasures of shells to be found in the sand.

But she did not care to leave the carriage, even to sit with her brother near the guards of the boat, and was soon drowsy again. Still, both brother and aunt felt new hope, when they were comfortably settled in their new quarters, and Etta, lying upon an easy lounge, was evidently less feverish and brighter.

But the next day, and for many days, the fever raged fiercely and Dr. Lewis, coming every other day, looked very grave and spoke without many words of encouragement. Mr. Westbrooke coming in the last afternoon boat, and returning in the first morning one, was gloomy and despondent, but Harry, full of bitter grief, was also feeling a comfort he had never known before, in loving sympathy and Christian words of hope.



As he had said, the loss of the other children had been to him the crushing sorrow of total bereavement ; but Miss Westbrooke, by her words of strengthening faith, was sanctifying that past bitterness, and drawing the sting from this present fear. The little confined forms that had haunted the boy's dreams, and filled his heart with a sense of desolation, became angel visions, as his aunt talked of them, and read to him the precious promises for children in the Holy Scriptures. Although his own life had known no physical hardships, it became a comfort to him to think of the tender little feet that were saved from any of life's rough paths, and safe to all eternity.

"It makes heaven seem very near, Auntie," he said one day, "to think of Charlie there, waiting for me. I never thought much about dying, but it seems now, as if it would be easier to go from earth, if those we love wait for us in heaven."

"And One whom we should love still more tenderly than any earthly friend calls us to him," Miss Westbrooke said.

She was often surprised at the child-like faith with which Harry accepted all her instructions and his own Bible reading. His conversation upon other matters proved him to have an intellect de-



veloped beyond that of most boys of his age, his mind having been nourished at the expense of his heart. But he never was anxious to argue upon religious topics, as he was upon many others ; never desirous of putting the words of promise to any test of reasoning, as he would many other theories of which he read or heard. It seemed as if, young as he was, he rested in this new life of love and trust in God just opened to him, as really as many way-worn pilgrims who come to the haven only after years of doubt and struggle.

Something to love he had craved from his cradle, and gradually, in those quiet summer days, while he watched his baby sister, and listened to his aunt's sweet voice, his heart was drawn closer and closer to the love of Christ that death cannot take away, that earthly sorrow cannot sever.

He could pray for Etta, not merely watch with blind terror as he had watched Charlie ; and his petitions comforted him, even when there was such pressing danger, that the prayer for strength to bear separation was more frequent than pleading for the tender life to be spared.

But, after two weeks of suffering the child began to brighten, the doctor came less frequently, Mr. Westbrooke ceased his daily visits, and Harry



felt his heart filled with gratitude, as the danger seemed to be over. He devoted himself entirely to the child, walking with her as she grew stronger, planning amusements for her, reading little stories out of some child's books. Mr. Westbrooke sent down to help pass the time, and delighting to hear her merry laugh ring out once more, and see the pretty rose tints coming again to her thin cheeks.

Only when his sister slept did he take out his long-neglected books, and apply himself diligently to his studies. For September was very near when Etta began to recover, and on the 15th he would again enter the Academy.



## CHAPTER VIII.

*HOME AGAIN.*

"ETTA very sorry," was the child's comment when told the seaside visit must soon end, and a return to the city take place in a few days. "Etta likes the water, and the shells, and all the fings here."

"But you like your dollies and toys too, don't you?" said Harry, "and you want to see Margaret and Jeannette."

"I like auntie and you better'n Margy and Jeannette," said Etta decidedly, having, baby as she was, realized the difference between the loving devotion given to her in the last few weeks, and the hired care of her fine nursery.

"Poor child!" Harry said lovingly, "I know what it is to be alone in the great nursery."

"But," said Miss Westbrooke kindly, "you need not fear that Etta will be left entirely to Margaret. I shall ask your father's permission to dismiss Jeannette, for I find Etta has learned some words that would translate into what plain-spoken people call swearing."

"Auntie!"



“Quite true. For example, you would scarcely like to hear your sister’s baby lips say, ‘My God!’ but more than once I have seen her little hands clasped dramatically, in perfect imitation of Jeannette’s, while she exclaimed, ‘Mon Dieu,’ most tragically. A minor evil is, that the French she is hearing is strongly provincial and ungrammatical. If she learns the language from Jeannette, she will have a great deal to unlearn before she ever can speak French with well-educated people.”

“I am glad I did not have a French nurse then, though poor mamma was always sorry for that omission. My governess grounded me well in the rules, but I was eight years old before I took a lesson.”

“Do n’t ’ike Fwench,” said Etta, “and Jeannette slaps Etta when she do n’t know what she is telling her to do. P’ease, brother Harry, take Etta to walk.”

This request Harry granted at once, leaving Miss Westbrooke to pack, and carefully put into the trunks the treasures of shells and sea-weeds that Etta had enjoyed as playthings more than the entire contents of her costly cabinet. More than one tear fell upon the baby possessions; for, although little accustomed to children, the kind



aunt knew that Etta was a very delicate, frail child, with all her naturally weak constitution still further enervated by the hothouse life she had led, stifled in a nursery, and breathing the pure air only in a carriage, or walking demurely by the side of a French maid. The bounding step of a free, happy child, the tendency to noisy play, had been curbed in Mrs. Westbrooke's children, and illy replaced by a precocious decorum and the slender figures and pure complexions of delicate little ladies and gentlemen. Even Harry, who had passed safely through the perilous sicknesses of childhood, was not robust, although he enjoyed good health.

The weeks of sea-air and freedom had given to his eyes a new brightness, and he was surprised to find how much more clear and active his mind was, after the early hours, simple diet, and constant outdoor exercise of his sojourn at Rockaway. Summer trips, before this, had been but a training in society, Mrs. Westbrooke requiring of Harry, as her companion, all the courteous attention she required from any gentleman who was her escort, and entirely forbidding any of the noisy games or rough play indulged in by other boys of his own age, even in the fashionable hotels where they lived. And Harry himself, not being very strong,



and naturally of a quiet, studious disposition, had submitted more willingly than a more active boy would have done, to such restraint.

"It'll be awful lonesome at home," Etta sighed, as after a short walk she rested in Harry's arms on the broad piazza of the hotel; "you'll be away all the time."

"Oh, no; I am only in school till two o'clock, and we can have a walk every afternoon, Etta."

"Can we, Hawwy?" and the baby-voice sank to a whisper of happy confidence. "I'se doing to s'leep wiv auntie all the time when we do back, same's I do now."

"That will be famous," was the cordial reply, as Harry gratefully thought how much easier he would feel about his little sister, knowing she was in such loving care at night.

"'Ess, and she tells me 'tories, booful 'tories, Hawwy; all about heaven and the angels, that love Etta same's 'oo does."

The boy's arms clasped the little figure closer. Not yet could he think even angel love as strong and tender as his own.

"Etta finks," said the child gravely, "that more angels lives here than in New York."

"Why do you think so, Etta?"



"'Cause, the sky is so big, and Etta can see way up, way up, most into heaven. And sometimes Etta sees the angels, whole lots of 'em, flying along. There's some now!" she cried, pointing to a large, fleecy white cloud slowly sailing across the deep blue beyond. And Harry, easily seeing how a childish fancy could see a group of white-winged angels there, did not contradict his sister.

"Some day," she said, "they'll all fly down here, and take Etta in their arms, same's 'oo does when Etta is tired, and carry her way up in the booful heaven! Oh," sighed the child wearily, "it is all booful, like here, auntie says, and 'oo can come too."

Harry's lips softly pressed the prattling ones, to stop the prophecy that was so deeply painful to him. Even to the angels, even to enter the bright, beautiful heaven, he could not willingly give Etta up, though he feared she would follow those other little ones he had mourned so deeply.

"O God," he said in his heart, "spare her to us; let her live to help me to be thy servant."

For, looking at the pure, sweet face, with his heart so newly impressed by holy teachings, the lad felt it would strengthen him in all good resolutions, to know this dear sister would soon look to



him for advice and guidance. A few months ago he would have been a stranger to any such thoughtful love. Satisfied with the routine in which he had been educated, he carelessly supposed older heads controlled Etta's life. But he was learning to carry every thought and act to the highest test of motive, and he knew he could take from Etta's life some of the bitterness of his own childhood.

"She shall never grow up so forlorn as I was," he thought, "and know nothing of her Saviour till she is almost a woman. God helping me, I will give her a stronger staff to lean upon than lady-like deportment and handsome dress."

Presently Etta spoke again, bewailing the necessity of a return to the city, and telling Harry the many baby-sorrows he understood well. Jeanette was evidently ill-tempered and rough, when alone with Etta; but the child seemed fond of Margaret, although highly delighted at the prospect of having her crib taken into Miss Westbrooke's room. Margaret slept heavily, and Etta was often restless, and made Harry's heart ache as she told him of the hot nights when she was so "firsty, and Margy 'oold n't wake up and dive me a dwink, and I was fwaid to dit up 'cause a mouse 'ood nibble my toes,"



Jeannette had a nursery bugaboo, too, that Etta believed lurked in the closet to spring out upon little girls who woke up at unseasonable hours ; and the poor child had evidently suffered many hours of misery tossing with thirst, afraid to get up for water, and unable to waken the weary nurse. Every restless desire of childhood had been curbed, till it was only wonderful that there was even so much power left in the slender arms and legs, the tiny fingers and feet.

They were far too quiet now, needing no check from older people to rest passive for hours, not tied in nursery chairs, but held in loving arms, while the picture-books or quiet toys were replaced by sweet voices telling child stories, or winning the baby-heart to think of a higher, happier world than the one around her.

It had never occurred to Harry to interfere in any of the domestic arrangements of his splendid home ; but listening to Etta relating her baby trials, he resolved to follow up his aunt's suggestion to dismiss Jeannette, by all the eloquence at his command. Even without regarding it as a sin, he had always regarded profanity with fastidious disgust, and the thought of an oath on Etta's lips in any language gave him a feeling of horror, while yet he



could readily understand how easily such a habit could be indulged in with the sounds familiar from a nurse's lips. And the baby prattle was revealing that Margaret's superstitious and vulgar words were only of secondary importance when compared with actual profane language.

The lad was old enough, and had thought and read enough upon subjects in advance of his years, to think as he listened, "If ever I marry and have children, their nursery shall be their mother's room, and no hired hands or voices shall have uncontrolled care of their baby lives. And yet, it does not seem to me as if any of the pretty girls I know, who are so daintily dressed and so pleasant to talk to, would ever be like Aunt Ellen, or care to be bothered with nursery duties. I wonder where rich men look for good wives!" and then he burst into a laugh, realizing the absurdity of such speculations at seventeen. It was a keen pain that followed a moment later at the oft-recurring thought, "My beautiful mother never could have really loved us very much. But how lovely she was!" For the memory would ever live in Harry's heart of the exquisite beauty of that young mother, whom he seldom saw except in costly and becoming attire—a very fairy vision in his boyish eyes. He had loved her as heathens



love some gorgeous idol they may never touch, but worship afar off more in awe than in affection. Her caresses, rarely given, had been accepted as favors that would be withdrawn if any rude movement disturbed a ruffle or a curl. No good, boyish hugs, no sobbing, childish petitions for kisses to cure a hurt spot, no hours of cuddling in tender embrace, represented mother-love to Harry, but kisses seldom bestowed, with every care for the preservation of a faultless dress, and an occasional gentle pat upon the shoulder, or word of affection.

Even from his father the boy had received more hearty caresses, though but seldom bestowed, Mr. Westbrooke being far more impressed with the duty of keeping up a gorgeous establishment than that of being a true father to his son.

Etta, easily wearied after her illness, was fast asleep in her brother's arms when Miss Westbrooke, seeing her from the window, came with a large warm shawl to wrap about her. "It might be dangerous to have her chilled," she said, "and though the day is not cold, the ocean air is keen."

"Is she better, Auntie?" Harry said in a pleading tone, that moved his aunt deeply.

"Much better certainly than she was a week ago even. But she will need watchful care all win-



ter, I fear. She was never very strong, Dr. Lewis tells me."

"I do not think she was ever very sick before. She has had none of the sicknesses I had—scarlet-fever, whooping-cough, measles, and all the rest."

"No, but she has been kept in the house a great deal. I wish I could take her to Fairhaven for a year or two. Country air and country fare are the best of all medicines for little folks. If your father should be willing, Harry, would you let her go?"

"And you?"

The boy's tone of dismay was the highest compliment he could have paid his aunt, and it was perfectly sincere. Aunt Ellen and Etta taken from him! Could misfortune go much farther?

"I should have to go certainly; but I will say no more about it, if you need me, Harry."

"We all need you!"

"Scarcely, dear. Your father's housekeeper is thoroughly conversant with her duties, and resents any interference on my part, and you could still be your father's companion. But Etta, I fear, will never be strong in the city. I confess that the thought of taking her home with me did not occur to me till Dr. Lewis suggested the possibility. He



said New York air was poison to the child, and he wished she could spend one or two years in the country."

"To save her life?" the boy asked slowly.

"With that hope."

Harry bent his face down over the pale sleeping one pillowed upon his breast, and hot tears rolled slowly down his cheeks before he lifted it again, and looked out upon the water rolling in with monotonous music so near him. He saw nothing of the white-capped waves breaking almost at his feet; he heard nothing of the merry voices of the bathers. Through a mist of tears he seemed to see Etta, white and still, her baby voice silenced in death, her blue eyes closed in the final sleep. And to save her he must let her go from him, and lose with her the gentle friend and teacher who was so tenderly guiding him to a purer, higher life than he had ever led.

It was a long time before he could trust his voice to speak, and Miss Westbrooke, watching him, was sadly perplexed by doubts about her duty. Was even the saving of Etta's life a sufficient reason for leaving this young heart once more alone in its temptations and struggles? Then, very humbly, she remembered that Harry could never again be



alone, having once found the Guide and Comforter. And her duty seemed plainer, realizing the fact that Harry had grasped holy truths and teachings so lovingly and strongly. Presently he said, still looking straight before him, and controlling his voice by a strong effort, "No sacrifice can be too great to make for Etta's sake. But I shall miss you terribly."

"And I shall miss you, Harry. You have given me the pleasantest hours I have had since I left home. But we may be tormenting ourselves for nothing, as your father may perhaps object to following the doctor's advice."

Harry would not accept that doubtful comfort. "Father loves Etta far too well to object to any plan that will benefit her," he said.

"He may allow you to accompany us."

"It would not be right for me to go," was the quiet reply. "He would be entirely alone, and I know he likes to have me in the room with him, although he never talks much to me. We may get better acquainted," Harry added with a sad smile, "when we are together more. I should like to feel myself of any use to him. You know I am to be his partner after I come of age."

"I heard something of it."



"He told me some months ago, and has often referred to it since. He wants me to finish my college course first. O Auntie, I am afraid I cannot keep straight without you."

"You have a better Friend than I can be, Harry, if you will seek him; one who can be ever near you, and is never deaf to the calls of his children."

"But I know him so little, and there are so many little sins coming every day to tempt me. I can never tell half of them."

"But Christ can deliver from the love and power of all, Harry."

"All? So many are trifling, so many seem like positive social duties," said the lad, who had been weighing his many faults with the severe justice very often found in a newly-awakened conscience.

"Have you ever gone to your father for advice?"

"Never!"

"In any real difficulty you had better do so." Miss Westbrooke spoke slowly, giving the advice after much painful thought, prayerfully hoping that the responsibility of guiding this young life would recall to her brother the Christian teachings of his own father, sadly obscured and clouded by a long



life spent in piling dollar upon dollar, without thought of that future existence where no wealth can purchase happiness.

"Henry certainly loves his children," Miss Westbrooke thought, "and he cannot advise Harry without pausing to think of the effect of his words. It may be, when they are alone together they will understand each other better, and mutually influence their lives for higher aims than business or money-making."

"Are you homesick, Auntie?" Harry asked presently.

"No, dear."

"I think you must sometimes long for the quiet and peace of the country, especially in the summer."

"I think," was the quiet answer, "my health would soon suffer in the city. But if my duty lay there, I should never be homesick."

"Duty is your watchword."

"As it will be yours, I hope, Harry. As it should be the watchword of every Christian. But we must go in, dear. The boat will be here in an hour, and Etta must have some dinner. Your father will send the carriage on the boat, and perhaps come himself."



But the carriage came without its owner, and the little party returned to New York under Harry's escort only, arriving at the door of their home just as Mr. Westbrooke, paler and gloomier than ever, came up the steps to dinner.



## CHAPTER IX.

*FOR ETTA'S SAKE.*

THE first interview with Dr. Lewis, after the return of the Westbrookes from Rockaway, only resulted in his repeating most urgently the advice to remove the little patient as speedily as possible from the city air and the warm nursery.

"I think in pure country air, with plain food and such care as you have already given her, she will recover her health, and lay the foundation for more strength than she has ever had," he said to Miss Westbrooke; "but my experience of child life in this house gives me very little hope for her if she remains here."

"But," Miss Westbrooke said, thinking of Harry, "she would not be left to hired nurses again."

"A great gain, no doubt, but the mischief is done. She has spent more than four years like an exotic, and you understand must take freedom and fresh air very gradually and carefully at first. But, so taking it, well-protected against cold, and not exposed to noonday heat in summer, I believe it will save her."



After that conversation, Miss Westbrooke had no further hesitation in the matter. Her own duty lay plain before her, and she spoke to her brother as soon as he returned to the house from his daily business. It was an easy task to win his consent to the proposed plan, and Miss Westbrooke was surprised to notice a certain expression of relief upon his face, as he said, "I think, Ellen, I will break up the whole establishment after you are gone. The house will need a mistress, and is far too large for Harry and myself. We will get a pleasant boarding-house and trust Etta entirely to you. And in view of that, will you take with you all of Louisa's personal property? You will know best what will be useful to Etta and to yourself. I leave it all to you. Everything belonging to Etta you will take, of course, and if you need anything more, let me know."

He turned to go as he spoke, but his sister spoke pleadingly. "Henry," she said, putting her hand on his, "Harry will have no one but you when we are gone."

"Oh, he will do very well. He will not leave the Academy for the present."

"He is a noble boy, Henry."

"Yes!" said the gratified father. "Harry is a



fine fellow, courteous and manly, and well advanced in his studies. I look forward to a noble career for Harry, unless—" and his face fell, while he was evidently restlessly desirous of ending the conversation.

But the gently restraining hand held him, while Miss Westbrooke said, "When you are his only adviser, Henry, will you not remember our own father's teachings?"

"Well, you see, Ellen, the world has changed in sixty years, and Harry's life will not be likely to be that of a country farmer, no matter what happens."

"There are principles to be inculcated, and truths to be impressed, Henry, that will apply as well to the city merchant as to the country farmer."

"Oh, you mean religious matters! That will come soon enough. I don't want to see a boy of seventeen too religious."

"Nor do I," was the answer, "but surely, Henry, you want to see him a Christian man."

"Oh, yes, of course. I'll take him to church when I have time, and—and—well, as I said, there is time enough. I really cannot stay to talk any longer, Ellen. I have important letters to write. Don't forget what I said about Louisa's and Etta's



things. You will find all the keys in the upper drawer of my bureau, and I leave everything to your own judgment. Make your own selections."

Then he hurried away, glad to escape any further stirring of the conscience he had lulled for so many long years. What possessed Ellen to talk of his father? He had letters to write, letters of importance, and yet he sat in his library, with the pen and paper before him, picturing that country home where he had last seen his father. He was just sixteen on that day, younger than Harry; but his father was not an old man, as he was to-day, but a tall, stalwart farmer, not forty years old, with curling brown hair and teeth white as milk. He saw again the homely kitchen, his mother quietly crying in a corner, his little sister wide-eyed and curious, and his father holding him fast by both hands while he spoke earnest words of counsel and blessing. Years ago he had let the crust of worldliness cover those parting words, but vivid and clear they recurred to him: "May God guide your steps in the great city, my son! May he prosper you, protect you, and keep your heart pure in his service!"

Had the prayer been answered? Henry Westbrooke had prospered greatly in worldly matters,



and had been kept from positive vice by the strong desire to amass wealth. He had been too economical to spend hard-earned savings in pleasure-seeking; had been too cautious to gamble, too desirous to keep a clear head and steady brain to drink. Morally, he stood well in the community; a man of known integrity, of spotless reputation. But was his heart pure in God's service? What service had he offered in fifty years? What had he done in Christ's name in his long prosperous life?

Some ostentatious charities knew him as a liberal contributor to their funds; some few times in the course of a year he went to church, for the sake of appearance, and when there usually thought deeply upon any business scheme under consideration.

God's service! Truly, for fifty years he had forgotten he owed any to the Divine Being who gave him all the good things his heart desired. And he was not pleased at this sudden thrust made at his long quiet conscience. Surely with his recent widowhood, Etta's state of health, and other matters he did not define even in thought, he was sufficiently troubled without worrying about that long past prayer of his dead father's.

He had done his duty to his family, after his



mother was widowed, sending her money hardly earned in those days, and many comforts for her declining years. And he had settled upon Ellen years before a securely invested sum of money, quite out of his power ever to recall or touch. The first comfort of this hour of meditation lay in that thought. Ellen's little fortune was secure and entirely under her own control! The dinner-bell sounded, and no letter was yet written, but there was an added weariness upon Mr. Westbrooke's face, which his son and sister wrongly attributed to anxiety about Etta.

Busy days followed, for the selecting and packing of Mrs. Westbrooke's and Etta's possessions was no trifling task, especially as Etta herself required a great deal of attention. The days were still very hot and close, and the child drooped so decidedly that Dr. Lewis urged haste in leaving the city, whenever he called. Harry, controlling his own grief for the sake of the little sister he so dearly loved, gave most efficient aid in both nursing and packing, whenever he was able to be released from school studies and exercises.

Many long conversations he was never to forget he had with his aunt Ellen, while he held Etta in in his arms, fanning and rocking her, and Miss



Westbrooke sorted and folded, while Margaret and Jeannette packed the great Saratoga trunks that were to go to Fairhaven. Even Harry, accustomed as he was to his mother's luxurious dress and habits, wondered at the number and variety of dresses and jewels that were taken out to pack.

"Your father insists upon my taking them," Miss Westbrooke said, "though it is difficult to imagine what use I can ever make of them for Etta, for many years at any rate. I intend to introduce her to easy plain dresses, that will bear active country exercise, as soon as she is strong enough to run."

"And ap'ons for corn for the chickies!" said Etta, looking up.

"Yes, darling, aprons for corn for the chickens!" said Miss Westbrooke; "they will soon learn to love little Etta, when she feeds them."

"Live pets!" said Harry, smiling, "how I teased and cried for them; but they were too dirty, too noisy, too troublesome, and even a canary-bird was denied me, because it woke my nurse too early in the morning."

"Pets are troublesome in the city; but I think they form the great delight of country children," said Miss Westbrooke. "I cannot remember one



hour of my life when I did not have pets, and always one especial favorite. A snow white calf with a black star on her forehead was my darling for years after she became a motherly old cow, and would allow no one but myself to milk her. She died at last, of sheer old age, for I would never have her killed. When I left home, two white kittens were the latest pets, but they must be well grown by this time."

"Etta likes kitties," said Etta, whose only acquaintance with kittens was a great admiration of their pictures in story-books. "I wis' bwover Hawwy was tummin' too, to see the kitties and chickies!"

"I wish so too," said Harry, sighing. "I hate to think to-morrow is the last day. And after that we must have a week of bustle before leaving the house. Our whole lives seemed revolutionized since last spring!"

"You must write to me often, dear, and tell me all that interests you," said Miss Westbrooke.

"Our lives will be rather monotonous I imagine, for I mean to study hard, and father will probably be absorbed in business, as usual. You will hardly care for a record of lessons, perfect or imperfect."



"I will care for any detail that makes up the sum of your life, Harry. I am glad your old ambition to excel in study has come back, because your father is evidently so proud of your progress.

"But"—and Miss Westbrooke's voice grew very earnest—"you will not allow even that to take the place of more important reading, morning and evening, Harry?"

"I will not," was the grave reply. "Your beautiful gift, my first Bible, shall lie upon my bedroom table, wherever we may be, Aunt Ellen, and I will not neglect its pages, or take its teachings carelessly. I feel my own ignorance very painfully, and I shall long for you every time I open my book; but I will try, prayerfully, to keep my standard erect and shining."

"And when temptations come, Harry, seek for strength where help never fails."

Margaret and Jeannette had left the room before these last serious words were spoken, but they now returned bringing Etta's costly toys from the nursery, to be packed in the tops of the large trunks. The French doll and her wardrobe and jewelry had a separate box, carefully fastened; and most of the mechanical toys had their own cases. But the packing required careful supervision, for Miss



Westbrooke was aware of the money value of the articles, and loath to have them injured although they represented to her a waste almost unpardonable.

"Etta will be able to open a museum in Fairhaven," she said, smiling; "for I think all the grown people as well as the children will flock to see those toys. They are a wonder to me yet, and I shall be half afraid to wind them up, or handle them, for fear of ruining them."

"They are regular rubbish, as far as children are concerned," said Harry contemptuously. "I had just such a collection, and if I ventured to touch one, a cry of warning reminded me of their value. I have spent hour after hour building houses with bundles of kindling wood, with hundreds of dollars' worth of toys upon shelves I could not reach, all supposed to have been purchased for my amusement. If I were you, Auntie, I would let Etta have the pleasure of smashing them all, if she cannot enjoy them in any other way. There," and he laughed a clear boyish laugh, "you look as horrified as the most tyrannical nurse of them all."

Miss Westbrooke's expression of dismay gave way to smiles at her nephew's criticism, and she said pleasantly, "We shall be out of the reach of



toy-shops, Harry, and in the long winter days, when Etta must stay indoors, perhaps we can learn to play with the toys without breaking them."

"Do n't want toys ; I want chickies," murmured Etta drowsily, having been half asleep during this long conversation.

"There!" Margaret said presently, "that is all that we can do to-night, Miss Westbrooke, if you do not want these two last trunks fastened till to-morrow evening. I will bring up Miss Etta's travelling dress early, so that it can air all day. I hope, I am sure," she added kindly, "that the change will do her good. She's always been a weakly little thing, they say, and I'm sure she's the quietest child I ever nursed, no trouble to anybody."

With this doubtful praise Margaret kissed the little pale face resting on Harry's shoulder, and went to her last laundry work for the sick child.

All that evening and as much of the next day as he could be at home, Harry passed with his aunt and sister, grudging every moment spent away from them, in view of the long separation in prospect. Unless there was some change such as they all hesitated to mention in the little invalid, there was no proposal of meeting until Harry's July va-



cation, which his aunt cordially invited him to spend at Fairhaven. Letters would be some comfort, but poor Harry with an aching heart felt that letters would not bring the clasp of Etta's baby arms about his neck, the sweet voice and bright smile of his aunt Ellen. Yet, with rare self-control, the boy made no show of his sorrow, keeping a cheerful face over his sore heart, ever helpful, ever pleasant, and throwing no cloud of discontent over the prospect that was so cheerless.

"For Etta's sake! To save Etta's life!"

These were the words he whispered to his own heart whenever the separation seemed too hard to bear, and they lingered on his lips, when at the *dépôt* he gave the child, after one close warm embrace, into Miss Westbrooke's arms, and kissing her silently, too much moved to speak, he turned away, sadly conscious that the very sunshine of his home was gone.

"Without Etta to love, without Aunt Ellen to help me," he thought, "shall I ever be able to keep my heart strong and my life stainless?" and while he struggled to keep back any outward sign of emotion, his heart was lifted in fervent prayer for love and strength, beyond any earth could offer.

He was glad that the hour made it necessary



to hasten at once from the dépôt to the Academy ; for the travellers had left upon an early morning train, Mr. Westbrooke having said farewell at the carriage-door, before they drove from the house, and confided all arrangements of baggage and tickets to Harry, who had often been his mother's only escort in summer travel.

"I am glad I can study for five hours at any rate," Harry thought, "and perhaps it will not seem so desolate in the boardinghouse next week. I can't miss Aunt Ellen and Etta so much as I should at home. If only the little darling gets strong and well, we can bear any sacrifice. Poor father ! I must be everything to him now !" The consciousness of being necessary to the happiness of another carried some comfort to the lonely, aching heart of the boy, who was a true child in tender affection, if he was almost a man in years and intellect.



## CHAPTER X.

## THE NEW HOME.

THE splendid house in which the Westbrookes had lived for more than nineteen years had never been a home in the tender loving sense of the word. Very few associations of sweet intercourse clustered about the superbly-furnished rooms, even that room that will often bring a smile or a tear into the eyes of old people when remembered or named—"mother's room."

To Harry it was merely an apartment where he had been taken by his nurse when dressed for a walk or a drive, to wait patiently while his mother put the last touches to her own outdoor costume. His own room was pleasant, but his father had told him to remove anything he fancied from his mother's room, or any part of the house, to the rooms already engaged in a large boardinghouse.

Yet it was a sore pain to the lad when he returned from school, to find the auctioneer and his assistants already labelling and sorting the furniture, tramping from room to room, making the arrangements most convenient for a sale.



He found his father in the library, wearily leaning back in his chair, his face pale and careworn, and already the sense of being needed roused the boy from his own grief.

"You look very tired," he said respectfully, "can I be of any use?"

"I am very tired," was the reply, "but there is very little in this room to be sold, and I can scarcely trust the selection out of my own hands. The books and cases I want you to have. The standing desk and library-table can go, but my own secretary had better be locked, just as it is, and moved to my room. You are sure your aunt has all your mother's things? I could not bear to have them sold."

"Aunt Ellen understood that perfectly, sir. She packed all the books, pictures, and ornaments, everything in the rooms indeed, her bedroom and boudoir, excepting the heavy furniture."

"For Etta! Etta will value them when she is older. As for you and me, Harry, we are able to bear loneliness and sorrow; but we will spare Etta if we can."

There was a tone of anxiety in these words that greatly surprised Harry, and yet he was proud of the certainty that his father was already making



him a companion, taking him into a partnership of feeling as if he was already a man.

"Etta must be happy with Aunt Ellen," he said, thinking a moment before speaking, to find the most comforting assurance.

"Yes, yes! Ellen is very kind, very good! We will run up there some day, Harry, and you shall see the home where your father was born. Very different from this," he added, but not proudly, only with a deep sigh, "very different! I did not have your advantages," he added, with a troubled, anxious face, "and yet I prospered. You ought to be able to do more than your father has done, my boy, if ever you are called upon to care for yourself—and Etta."

Just at that moment one of the men put his head in at the door to ask Mr. Westbrooke to see about some arrangements in the drawingroom, and he followed him at once, leaving Harry rather bewildered at his last words.

"Care for yourself and Etta." Was his father going to die? The lad thought of the pale face and heavy eyes that he had scarcely noticed before, and his heart reproached him that he had done so little to help his father. All through the hot months, while he was enjoying the sea-breezes, he



now recollected that his father had been working steadily in his close countinghouse. To be sure, this was the customary state of affairs, but never before had any thought of the matter troubled Harry's brain.

"Father must rest," he thought. "I'll try to coax him to take a trip somewhere, or let me do some of his writing. If I am to be his partner, I might as well learn something of business now. But I know I shall hate it. I thought I might be a lawyer or a doctor, or even do nothing for years to come. I am glad the books are not to be sold. It was very kind for father to save them for me. But he is always kind." And again the sting of self-reproach reminded Harry how entirely as a matter of course he had accepted his father's indulgence for all his life, placing no especial value upon his privileges, his costly gifts, but accepting them with only the careless "Thank you, sir," he might have given to any stranger.

It was a new thought to him since his mother died, that since his infancy his father had been planning his future life ; that his school privileges were designed to save him from the troubles of a deficient education, one of Mr. Westbrooke's own trials ; that in all the advantages he enjoyed, his father



considered his future prosperity as well as his present pleasure. He knew that for all this love, expressed in thoughtful care more than in caresses or words of affection, he had given but little return. The opportunity to make amends for such carelessness was now before him, and very earnestly Harry resolved to lighten his father's loneliness and cares as much as was possible.

In the three days that followed, there was but little time for any quiet conversation, the house being filled with strangers buying and selling, men carrying away the furniture, and all the confusion of an auction sale keeping the inmates in a whirl of excitement. The house itself was sold last of all, and then, turning their faces away, Mr. Westbrooke and Harry followed the van containing the possessions they had reserved to their new home.

Their rooms consisted of three handsome apartments in a large stylish boardinghouse, one large sittingroom between two smaller rooms furnished for sleeping apartments, and all connected. It was more cheerful work to superintend the placing of their possessions so as to give a homelike air to the new place, than it had been to watch the dismantling of the old one. Harry tried to give the sittingroom as much as possible the look of the li-



brary that had been his father's favorite room in his old home, having, upon his own responsibility, ordered the removal of his arm-chair and rug, and a few of the pictures and ornaments.

Mr. Westbrooke parted from Harry at the door, saying, "I must go down-town for an hour or two, Harry. Can you see to all this?"—pointing to the van.

"Yes, sir. It is Saturday, you know. Is there any especial arrangement you would like made?"

"No! Do just as you like. You know the rooms, third story, front."

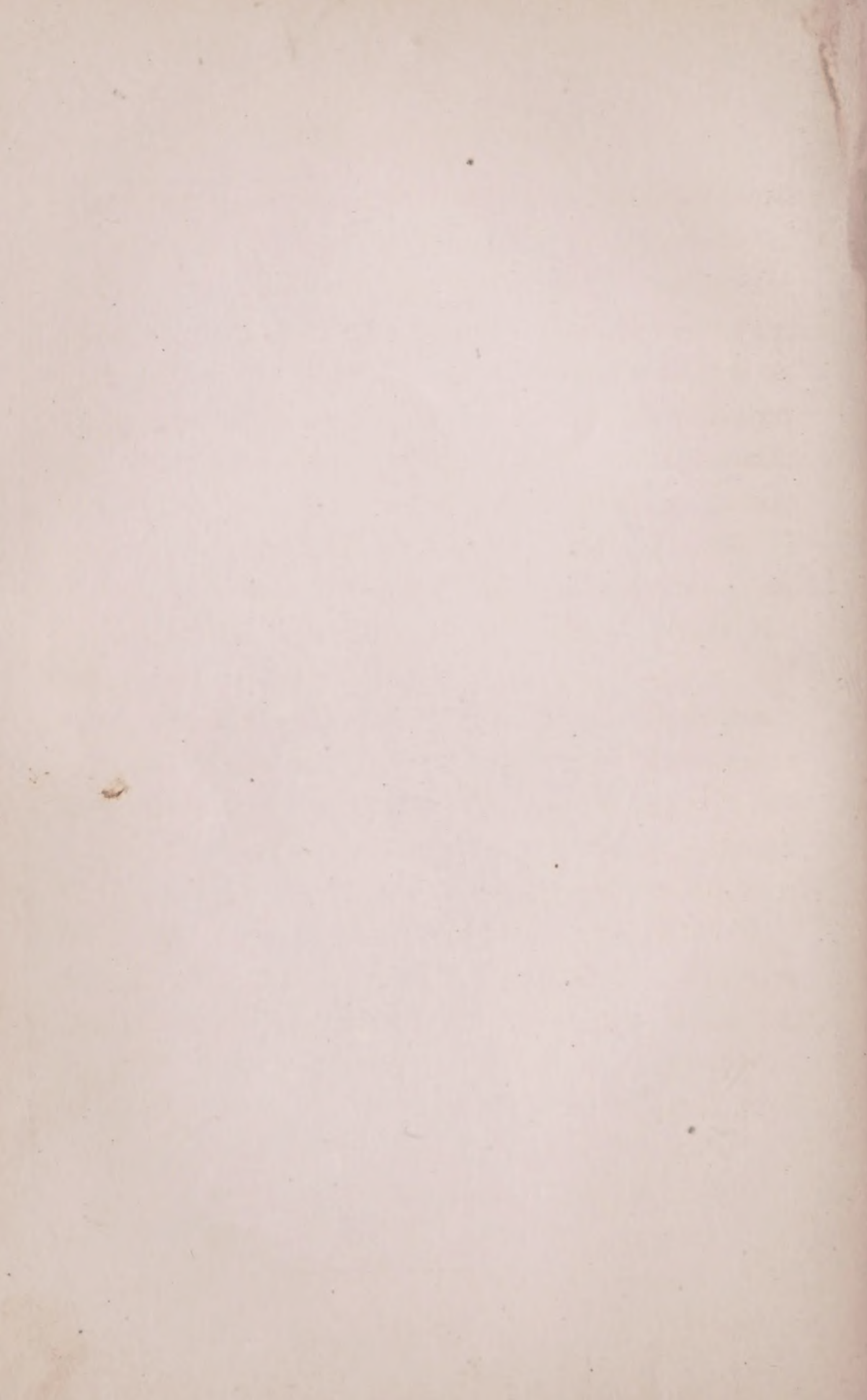
Harry went to work with a will, wondering a little at his own success in arranging many matters he had certainly never taken in his charge before. Taking off coat, vest and cuffs, he helped to shelve books, hang pictures, place ornaments, and when the carmen were dismissed, even unpacked the clothing and put it in orderly piles in his father's and his own bureau and closet.

"I think I would make a first-rate chambermaid," he said, laughing to himself, as he looked about him when he had finished his work. "Those trunks fit under the closet-shelf as if they were made to go there, and all the dust and rubbish is cleared away. Father will laugh when I tell him











how independently I declined the assistance of the landlady, Mrs.—what did he say her name was? Mrs.—oh, I know—Dalton. I wonder if all boardinghouse landladies are so cross. Meredith's looks as if she was fed on crab apples. Poor things, I suppose it is hard work! There, my hands are cleaned at last, though I began to despair of that result, and here comes father."

Mr. Westbrooke's glance of surprised pleasure quite repaid Harry for his day of unaccustomed toil. "It don't look at all as it did the day I engaged the rooms," he said, with evident gratification, "but really home-like! You have a better head than mine, Harry, for detail. I never thought of the chair or lounge, and now that they are here, I know how sorry I should have been to miss the pictures and bronzes."

"I am glad you approve," said Harry. "You had so much to think of, I thought I would venture to act so far on my own responsibility. There is a letter from Aunt Ellen for you, sir. She directed both here, yours and mine."

"How is Etta?"

"Better already, and gaining every day."

"That is good news."

"The best of news."



"Shall you be busy this evening?"

"Yes, very busy."

There was a pause of some moments, during which Mr. Westbrooke read his letter, and then sank into deep thought. Harry, with a new plan in his mind, that had cost him a severe struggle with his own selfish desires, watched the clouded thoughtful face silently wondering if it was wise to interrupt the train of meditation, a little shy yet of trying to break through his father's habitual reserve.

The dinner rang before he had conquered his hesitation, and there was a new ordeal in meeting so many strangers, though summer life at a hotel had set Harry at his ease under such circumstances.

No face among the many near him attracted him particularly, and he felt no disposition to enter the parlors, but followed his father up stairs. Mr. Westbrooke, however, at once said, "There are young people down stairs, Harry. You need not mope up here."

"I don't intend to mope, father. But," and he spoke eagerly and rapidly, half afraid yet of a reproof for officious interference, "I want you to let me help you, if I can."

"Help me! How?"



"I cannot say, sir. You must decide that. But I think I might do some of the writing, if you will be kind enough to teach me. And I am sure it will help me if I am to go into the business, to learn something of the routine. I hope I am not intruding, sir."

"No, my boy, no! You are thoughtful and kind. Perhaps after a time I can accept your offer; but not yet! I am obliged to give my own attention to the correspondence now! And you have your studies. Make the most of your school-time, Harry. I may change my mind about sending you to college."

Again that fear that his father felt some presentiment of death, crossed Harry's mind as he saw the tenderness of the gaze resting on his face. Demonstrative affection was very rare with the Westbrookes, but the fear and the love in the lad's heart prompted him to draw near his father, and grasp his hand hard.

"You are not looking well," he said, in a faltering voice, "and I am afraid you work too hard for us."

"There are some pressing matters requiring my close attention," was the reply, as the pressure of Harry's hand was returned, "but I am not ill, in



any way. At seventy, men feel any sorrow and excitement very deeply, Harry, very deeply."

He turned away as he spoke, and opened his secretary, while Harry, taking this as a hint to cease talking, opened a book, and began to read. It was still early, when, weary with his unusually busy day, he went to his own room, waking once or twice during the night to hear his father's pen still scratching busily, till the mantel clock chimed two, and the click of the lock of the secretary told him it was closed at last. But long after this, half-sleeping, half-waking, he heard his father's steps pacing up and down the sittingroom and finally he fell into a deep, dreamless sleep knowing Mr. Westbrooke had not yet gone to his own room.

It was not an unusual indulgence to sleep late on Sunday morning, and Mrs. Dalton was far too politic toward her fashionable boarders to make any disturbing noise about the house, allowing the choice between morning nap and breakfast to be entirely a matter of inclination. It was understood that the meal was ready until a late hour, but after ringing one bell at nine o'clock, no further disturbance of slumber was allowed. And there was not one child in the house, so that no baby voices or feet broke the quiet.



Very weary, awake unusually late, Harry therefore slumbered peacefully till after ten o'clock, waking at last with luxurious slowness, drowsily wondering if it was any time of day in particular. Stretching his hand to his watch, which lay as usual upon a table near the head of his bed, he started to see the hour.

"Quarter past ten! This wont do!" he thought. "I must make some arrangement to be called early. No church this morning, and I promised Aunt Ellen to go regularly. She must forgive me this time, in consideration of my heavy day's work yesterday. Father must be up! I hear some one in the sittingroom! I wonder if they keep a fellow's breakfast till noon."

Mr. Westbrooke was up, reading a newspaper, when Harry came in rather shamefaced at his tardiness.

"I gave orders to keep you something to eat," he said, as his son entered the room. "One must get accustomed, I suppose, to other people's rule. But you will find it all right."

"Thanks!" Harry said. "I do not often sleep till this hour. I must get some of the servants to call me earlier."

"Yes, it would not do on school-days, but it does



not make any difference on Sunday," said Mr. Westbrooke carelessly. "Are you going out?"

"Not this morning. I should be late for church; I will come up again, as soon as I get some breakfast."

"Oh, by the way! did you notice where they put a small tin-box, padlocked, that was in my trunk. I could not find it last night, and I did not like to wake you."

"It is on the upper shelf of the closet in this room. Shall I get it now?"

"I wish you would. And I will keep it on top of the secretary. Give orders to have it undisturbed, will you?"

"Yes, sir," Harry called from the closet, where standing upon one of the trunks he was reaching for the box. It was easily found, and placing it upon the table, Harry, after asking if there was anything more he could do and receiving an answer in the negative, went down to his late breakfast.



## CHAPTER XI.

*DIVIDED DUTY.*

HASTILY despatching a meal that had been kept too long upon the fire, and was eaten in solitary state, Harry was soon again in the sittingroom. He found his father had taken all the books and ornaments, even the cloth off the large centre-table, and was busily occupied in sorting the papers contained in the tin-box, and making them into packages bound with red tape.

It was not a new experience to Harry that his father worked at home upon Sunday, upon such papers and writing as could be put aside for a few days during the week; but he had never been brought into actual intercourse with him at such times. The library was understood to be Mr. Westbrooke's home-sanctum, where no one ventured to disturb him except upon important business, and of that Harry had very little, his most urgent requests usually meeting prompt attention, and as prompt a dismissal of the petitioner.

He felt a strange reluctance even yet to enter



the room where his father was so busily engaged, but his own bedroom was a middle room, lighted only from the large sittingroom, and very close and dim for reading. He took his Bible from the table at the bedside, wishing to fill the church-time with reading that would satisfy his own conscience, and moved quietly to a seat near the window. But quietly as he moved his father was fully aware of his presence, for he lifted his head presently, saying, "If you are not going out, Harry, I wish you would renew that offer of assistance you made last evening."

"Certainly, sir," was the prompt reply. "What can I do?"

"Just tie up the papers I have sorted into packages, as neatly as you can, like those I have already tied! You will find plenty of tape in the right-hand compartment of the box."

Pleased to be of use, Harry drew up his chair, and made up the parcels very neatly, while his father sorted as busily.

"I will give you a list presently," Mr. Westbrook said, "and get you to direct a package of envelopes for me. Each one must have one of those folded papers at your left hand and a stamp enclosed, as well as a stamp outside. I intended



to give them to a clerk to-morrow morning, but I can save one mail if they are done to-day."

Harry made no reply, bending low over his red tape and bundles of papers. In the interval of silence since he began his work, having only his hands employed, his thoughts had been most uncomfortably pressing.

Over and over had he repeated, always with a keener sense of wrong-doing, the words his aunt Ellen had used to rouse his own conscience, "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt do no manner of work."

Here Harry felt his hands faltering and his heart sinking, knowing he was acting in direct disobedience to the divine command.

As I have said before, Harry Westbrooke's disregard of religious duties had arisen from a want of proper instruction and example, and not from a hardening of the conscience by habitual rejection of its claims. But now these claims fell with sudden force and clearness upon a mind naturally candid, and urged by loving lips had taken firm hold of the boy, producing in him a tenderness of feeling seldom seen in persons whose religion is



merely a matter of habit. He could temporize with no duty. He weighed new questions sternly by only one balance. Expediency was not consulted, convenience was set aside, but the straight line between right and wrong was adjusted with prayerful thought.

Upon that Sunday morning, for the first time, however, this line did not appear to settle the question in Harry's heart. One commandment pointed to one duty. Another, "Honor thy father and thy mother," pressed as heavily upon the lad's heart. How could he, a boy of seventeen, attempt to dictate to his father, an old man whom he loved and respected?

Another minor consideration, perhaps, but very keenly felt, was his own apparent inconsistency. He had eagerly proffered help not twenty-four hours before, and at the first call made upon him, and for very light work, he would appear to enter reluctantly upon the task required. His father would surely think such reluctance proved the insincerity of his offers.

After all, it was but a few hours' work that was required of him, and he could spend the remainder of the day in occupations suited to the Sabbath. And while he thought painfully, and with his con-



science more and more uneasy, Harry kept his fingers busy tying up the parcels, until the last one was finished.

Seeing this, Mr. Westbrooke left his seat to open the secretary and take out the stamps and envelopes, and returning with these to the table, he noticed for the first time Harry's troubled face.

"You are tired, my son," he said, "or I am keeping you from some work of your own."

"No," Harry said, too truthful to make any evasions, "but I had rather write the envelope directions in the morning if you will call me early."

"Oh, the clerk can do them," said Mr. Westbrooke a little coldly. "I thought, from what you said last evening, you would like to be employed a little while in helping me."

"So I should," Harry said, "only I—" and then he paused.

Was it his place to teach his father his duty? Was it not rather more becoming and respectful to give him implicit obedience?

But he was no longer a child to be led blindly even by his father, and after a moment of hesitation he said in a low voice, "It is Sunday, father."

"And you think, after studying all the week, it



is rather hard to write all day Sunday," said Mr. Westbrooke kindly.

Again a gate of evasion was open, but again Harry resolutely closed it. "No," he said, more firmly now, "I like to write. But we are commanded not to work on the Sabbath."

There! He had said it! No martyr at the stake had ever spoken with a more true martyr spirit! What would follow? He dared not look up, and his face was very pale, as his father looked keenly and earnestly into it. A dead silence prevailed for a few moments, as the boy sat with troubled face and downcast eyes, his hands idly falling upon the paper-strewn table, waiting for his father to speak. And his father, standing opposite to him, the envelopes and stamps still in his hands, looked searchingly into the boy's face.

What did he read there? What recollections of his own boyhood, his own father's teachings, crowded into his busy troubled mind, in those few moments of deep quiet? Only his Maker knew. In a few moments, that seemed an hour to Harry, he spoke, very slowly, in a low voice, "Is that some of your aunt Ellen's teaching, my boy?"

The tone of the last two words nearly destroyed Harry's forced composure, but he said softly,



"Yes, father."

"I thought so! You do well to remember all that she has ever said to you, Harry. She is a pure upright Christian woman, and could teach you nothing but good."

"You are not angry with me?" Harry said imploringly, for his father's voice was almost stern in its gravity.

"No, my son, I am not angry with you. Nor will I ask you to strain your conscience for me. I will take this work to the office again."

"If you will let me do it in the morning," said Harry, "I am quite sure I can finish it before school-time; and indeed, father, I do want to help you."

"In your own time," said Mr. Westbrooke, smiling half sadly. "Well, take the envelopes and enclosures, and put them aside till morning, then. These drawers in the table are empty, put them in one of them. Take your book now, I will not disturb you again."

Harry opened his Bible with a lighter heart. He had not offended his father, but he was yet too young, too new a disciple himself, to attempt to guide his father's conscience. It was sufficient for him that he was released kindly with no reproach



for his unwillingness to perform the task set before him. He was quite sure that he could accomplish it early in the morning, and he would ask a servant to knock at the sittingroom door to awake him.

Musing and reading with a quietly happy face, he did not see that his father was earnestly watching him, letting his own work lie neglected under his hands. He did not know how the thoughts of the old man had travelled back with lightning speed to his own boyhood. "I wonder," he mused, "if I would have dared to speak out as Harry spoke when I was seventeen. To be sure, any rebellion on my part must have been against my employers, and threatening my means of living. And I don't remember that I was ever required to work on Sunday. I used to spend it in arranging my private affairs and mending my clothes. I wonder what that young gentleman at the window would say, if he knew that his father patched and darned a very scanty supply of clothes with his own fingers. Times are changed now!" and a heavy sigh concluded this train of thought.

"Ellen has roused the boy's religious feeling," he thought presently, "and he will be a regular young Puritan. He never can do anything by halves, never could. Some of his father's perseve-



rance has descended to him, surely! Poor Ellen! I think she was terribly shocked to find our ways so different from all she was trained to believe a Christian life. A Christian life! That was my father's life. But a man in business cannot be so strict;" and then an uneasy conscience sternly asked, "Why not?" "After all, as Ellen says, the lad has only his father now to look to for earthly guidance, and I suppose example is better than precept. I'll try to keep the Sunday work out of Harry's sight."

It was but a compromise with his conscience, but Mr. Westbrooke did not realize that. It was for his son's sake, not to make his own life better, that his thoughts had been devoted to serious consideration, and it was still for Harry's sake that he gathered up his half-finished work and put it aside, rather unwillingly, as he was accustomed to start on Monday with such business as this off his mind for the week. And business, after being the old merchant's idol for more than fifty years, could not fall to a secondary place suddenly, even when conscience spurred him most strongly. He had worshipped mammon with an undivided heart, and his love for his wife, children, and home, had never tempted him to neglect in the smallest measure



the gathering of wealth, although he was ever willing to spend it with a liberal hand. Married late in life, when already a rich man, he had never shared business cares with his family, who knew nothing of the source of the supplies they shared so bountifully and spent so freely,

It is therefore not unnatural that while Harry, finding his duty divided between that due to his God and that to his father, gave his religious convictions the first place, Mr. Westbrooke, choosing between his Creator and his son, gave Harry's welfare the first consideration. Fully desiring that Harry should be a good man, realizing for the first time that he must give the lad his own guidance and encouragement, he determined, not to abandon his Sunday work because God had so commanded, but simply to keep it out of Harry's sight, and so spare the boy the temptation of a bad example.

It was luncheon-time before the papers were put aside, and after that meal was over, Harry prepared to go to afternoon service.

"Out, Harry?" his father asked.

"I am going to church, sir. I wish you would go with me."

"I am too—" busy was the word to follow, but remembering his resolution. Mr. Westbrooke hesi-



tated. After all, he thought, the lad must be lonely, and church was a good place for any one.

"Well," he said, after a moment's pause, "I will, Harry. I will be ready in five minutes."

And in little more than that time the two left the house, with time enough still to walk slowly and leisurely to the sacred edifice, talking of Etta as they walked.

But in the church it pained Harry deeply to see the heavy gloom which had been to a certain degree dissipated by the last few days of excitement, gather once more upon his father's face. He rose mechanically, knelt and sat as others were doing around him, but it was evident his thoughts were far away, and Harry could not give his customary attention to the service, seeing the face he loved so shadowed and absorbed.

When they were again in their own room, after dinner, Mr. Westbrooke lay upon the lounge, and called Harry to sit beside him. Without defining his motives even to his own heart, he talked to his son of his own boyhood—of the struggles, temptations, and trials of his early life, dwelling strongly upon the industry, economy, and perseverance that had carried him steadily up the ladder of fortune, but refraining from his former pictures of Harry's



own entrance into business life under more favorable auspices. He no longer talked to him of that junior partnership that was to double the fortune already made in the business, but seemed more to dwell upon such sacrifices as he had made himself, and the necessity for cultivating the same self-denying spirit.

"I am an old man, Harry," he said, taking his son's hand in his own, "and look forward to your future with many hopes and some misgivings. I fear that I have been wrong to cultivate so many luxurious tastes and habits in your boyhood, and yet I could not bear to deny you any pleasure it was in my power to grant. But it makes a poor foundation for the cares that come to all of us, Harry."

"You can never regret that you have given me the opportunity to acquire a good education, father?"

"No, my boy, no. I had a very deficient education myself—could but just read and write when I left my home, and found it up-hill work to teach myself afterwards what little book-learning I possess. Even my knowledge of figures was self-taught after my work hours were over. But you will know all that. And, Harry, if you should be left alone, boy, you will never forget Etta."



"Never, though I trust she will have your care for many years to come."

"Ellen will keep her until she grows up. But you are older, and will be a man long before she is a woman. I neglected visiting my sister for years, Harry, but I always loved her, and my first care when I saw my own way clear to wealth was to secure a competency for Ellen."

"So she told me, sir. But Etta will never need more than you will give her, I hope."

"We cannot tell, my boy, we cannot tell. You were reading your Bible this morning?"

"Yes, sir."

"Another promise to your aunt?"

"Yes, sir, but a pleasure now as well."

"She has been a good friend to you, Harry. If ever you need advice, go to her for it. Now it is Sunday evening, and I am very tired. Read to me from your Bible."

Harry gladly obeyed, reading in a low, reverent voice, while his father lay with closed eyes, perfectly quiet. It was still early, when, thinking Mr. Westbrooke was sleeping, and anxious to wake in good season for his promised work, Harry went softly to his own room. Had he seen the two large tears that rolled down the old merchant's wrinkled cheeks



as he left him, he would have known that the quiet attitude was that of thoughtful listening, not sleep. Had he seen the lips move, he might perhaps have guessed the words they spoke: "O God, bless and protect him. Keep his heart pure, and save him from the pitfalls and snares of this world. In wealth or poverty, in prosperity or sorrow, guard and keep him."

For in that hour of silent meditation the old merchant's fond pride in his son deepened into a far more tender love than he had ever before known.



## CHAPTER XII.

*ETTA AT FAIRHAVEN.*

THE journey from New York to Fairhaven was an uninterrupted delight to little Etta. Softly cushioned by pillows upon the car-seat, or held tenderly in her aunt's arms, she watched the novel sights, too weak and languid to be restless, and sleeping when weary. Her questions proved her interest; and Miss Westbrooke, to whom the care of a child was a new pleasure, was never tired of listening to and answering the baby prattle.

It was nearly dark when the old-fashioned carry-all, that was the dépôt carriage at the Fairhaven station, drove into the gate of the farmyard, and rattled up to the kitchen-door. Already the evening was chilly, and the sight of the glowing cooking-stove was very inviting, and not less so the tempting supper spread upon a snowy cloth on a table near the centre of the large room. David and Mary Hill, servants who had grown gray in the service of the Westbrookes, were waiting to welcome Miss Ellen, whose long absence had been a sore



grief to them, and their greetings were warm and sincere.

"Sit right here," Mary said, drawing forward the easiest chair in the room; "and, David, you can shut the door now the carriage is through the gate. Deary me, what a sweet birdie!" she added, taking Etta into her own kind arms.

"We must try to get some country roses on her cheeks," said David, gently touching the little pale face with one big rough finger. "Our little ones were never so peaked as that, Mary."

"I hope Fairhaven air will soon make Etta as rosy as your children were, David," said Miss Westbrooke. "It will give the old farm a new home-look to see a child here."

David sighed. It had been a great sorrow to him and to his wife that all their children, when married, had left their old home; and they saw their grandchildren only in brief summer visits. They were more than willing to accept their share of the care of this little city child, so like a lily in delicacy that they were half afraid to touch her.

"May Etta have tum?" the child asked presently, pointing to the well-spread table.

"Yes, indeed, darling, as soon as I get your hat off. Are you very tired, Miss Ellen?"



"Yes. Travelling is something new to me. But I shall soon be rested again. Is Etta ready for supper?"

"Quite ready now."

"And vewy hungwy," said Etta.

The little one looked inquiringly from one face to the other, as Miss Westbrooke, David, and Mary stood with bowed heads at the table, while the mistress of the house asked a blessing. With the quick imitative perception of most children, she folded her own little hands and bent her own head also, lifting it quickly when they were all seated, to ask, "What you say 'at for, Auntie?"

"To thank God for giving us a good supper, Etta."

"You don't mean to say that child never heard a blessing asked before?" cried David.

"She has been brought up in a nursery by a maid," said Miss Westbrooke. "City ways are not our ways, David."

"I should think not," cried Mary, "if any mother could leave a sweet flower like that entirely to a nurse!"

"Does your supper taste nice?" asked David, touching Etta's curls.

"'Ess!" was the reply. "Etta likes it here."



And many times during the next few weeks did Miss Westbrooke receive the same assurance of little Etta's happiness. Etta certainly "liked" life at Fairhaven. The fall weather was still sufficiently warm during the daytime for active outdoor exercise, and when it was chilly in the morning and evening, all the indoor occupations were keen delights to the child.

Jeannette would probably have clasped her hands in horror, had she seen her dainty charge dressed in a neat plain dress, with a big gingham apron on, cutting out baby devices in thin-rolled gingerbread sheets, under Mary's delighted supervision, or denting the edges of piecrust with her tiny fingers. The usual pleasures of country children were never-ending sources of amusement, and all the anticipations regarding the "chickies" and "kitties" were more than realized. The child's extreme gentleness soon won the confidence of the live creatures, which were handled so tenderly that they never feared the outstretched baby hands that could not hurt them. The hens, ducks, and geese answered the soft cooing voice calling them in pretty baby invitation, and gathered to be fed around Etta's feet, while she scattered the corn from her carefully-held apron, never fearing even



the outstretched heads of the great white geese. Pigs she did not admire; of cows she was a little afraid; and it took some time for her to make a friend of Hero, the big house-dog. But the poultry delighted her from the first, and she gave loyal love to David and Mary, always pleased to be carried in David's arms about the farm, to be lifted up to reach great yellow pears or rosy-cheeked apples in the orchard, and as much delighted to trot after Mary in the kitchen, and feel the importance of helping in the cooking.

Mindful of every direction given by Dr. Lewis, Miss Westbrooke guarded Etta from exposure and chill, more than would have been needful with a more robust child; keeping her little feet well protected, her throat and chest carefully wrapped, but giving her plenty of fresh air and sunlight, and simple, nourishing food.

Mary truly declared that every day saw some improvement in Etta's health. The languid, slow step was soon replaced by a light, bounding run here or there, the sweet voice ringing out in true childish merriment. The thin cheeks rounded and grew rosy, the little frail figure became plump and strong, and before the really cold weather set in, Miss Westbrooke, deeply thankful, wrote to her



brother that Etta really seemed to be in perfect health.

“You would scarcely know Etta,” she wrote to Harry, “she is so round and rosy, and seems so strong. I am no sluggard, but before my eyes are open in the morning she is up, and can nearly dress herself, running to Mary only for buttons she cannot reach. Then she is down stairs, wrapped up well, for the mornings are cold, and off to the barn with David, to fill her apron with corn for the chickens. She never tires of that, and all the poultry would have a breakfast lasting till tea-time, I think, if our darling’s own appetite did not send her into the house at the first sound of the bell. And she does not taste little bits daintily, relishing only highly-seasoned dishes, but eats her bread, milk, eggs, and fruit, with a really healthy appreciation of their merits.

“After breakfast, not to tire the little feet too much, I teach Etta her letters, finding her own pretty picture-blocks a great help: and then we go over the house together, and you would be amused to see her dust the lower parts of the furniture, pound the feather pillows with her tiny fists, and pick up any threads she finds on the carpet. All this is to hurry ‘auntie’ for our daily walk, where



she finds great amusement in all the country sights and sounds. There is a small brook on the farm, where she can see little fish dart in and out among the rocks at the bottom, and that is a favorite walk. Some late fall blossoms generally make a 'posy' to carry home, and we can still find some fruit left by David in the gathering for the baby to pluck. Dinner comes at noon, for I do not like late hours for hearty meals; and after dinner we sew, our baby with a wee thimble putting stitches that would not bear very severe criticism, into little squares of calico, to make a patchwork quilt, whose destination at present is to cover 'bwover Hawwy's toes,' when finished.

"As we sew we talk, and I am trying to teach Etta to say each word plainly, and use the right letters. It is very comical to see the puckers this brings into the dear little face, and *r* and *l* are still unconquered difficulties. She is inclined to be a thoughtful child, and understands such teaching of holy things as suits her years very perfectly, deeply interested in all relating to the life of Christ. Hearing David speak of the manger, she was eager to see it, and I had to tell her the beautiful story of the Nativity in the barn, and point out to her, as far as I could, the points of resemblance. Her little



face will grow rapt with attention while she listens, and in her baby faults she will shake her head sadly to say, 'Jesus 'ont love a bad Etta. Etta must be dood.' And very good she is, the little darling. Mary is devoted to her, allowing her to make all sorts of messes in the kitchen, under the impression that she is preparing some great delicacy, and letting her assist on baking-days in all the biscuit cutting and pricking, and the filling of pie-plates.

"There is a wide piazza on the front of the house where Etta can play for hours, when we do not take a walk, and she has already collected there a number of playthings that would excite Jeanette's profound contempt. An empty bird's-nest David found, with three round stones for eggs, is one favorite, and there are many others quite as simple. Here, with a small doll she can easily hold and nurse, she spends much happy time rocking in the chair I brought from her nursery, and 'keeping house' upon a plan entirely her own.

"She talks a great deal of her father and of you, but I have never heard her express one regret for the loss of her splendid nursery, and she never asks for her toys. David has commenced the construction of a sled for the first snow, and Etta watches his progress with great interest, and hopes



for snow, to test its merits, very soon. I shall let her enjoy as much fresh-air exercise as is prudent, even in winter, when it is clear. And you must think of her as very happy, gaining in strength every day, and never forgetting her papa or yourself."

Then the letter referred to other matters, but this account of Etta was a great comfort both to Mr. Westbrooke and to Harry, who could be perfectly reconciled to the separation from the child knowing that she was benefiting so much by the change. Never having had companions of her own age, Etta did not miss them, perfectly satisfied with the attentions of the three old people who made her the very centre of their home-thoughts. She gladly exchanged her French doll, too precious to touch, for a small one with china head, feet, and hands, which could be washed, dressed and undressed, petted and carried, as all enjoyable dolls should be. Its cradle was allowed to stand near her own crib, and before she was herself undressed dollie's nightgown was found, her clothes taken off, her little figure nicely tucked into the cradle, and herself gravely requested to "shut her eyes and go s'leep, like dood dirl." Etta firmly believing the wide-open eyes closed finally as tightly as her own



for a night's slumber, although she informed Miss Westbrooke that no matter how early she got up, dollie was always "wide awake and looking at her."

Great washing of doll's clothing, and ironing of the same with a toy flat-iron Mary had preserved with some other treasures of her own children's babyhood, took place sometimes, and Etta never knew how carefully Mary rinsed and ironed the wee garments after she had so carefully and with such painstaking rubbed them into wrinkles and hung them over a chair to air nicely.

They were "booful and smooove and k'een," when the child found them the next day, and dollie was dressed to be exhibited to Miss Westbrooke. Every pleasure was of the simplest description, all bearing more or less upon some future lessons of usefulness; but Etta was thriving physically and mentally, learning early lessons she was never to forget, of a higher life than this one, and developing in spiritual sweetness as well as bodily health, during the whole long winter.

Anxieties that cost Miss Westbrooke many tears and many wakeful nights of prayer, did not touch the child's life, and her aunt was thankful that she was too young to share the perplexities of



those who were most near and dear to her. By the time spring opened all present anxiety about the child's health was at rest, although there was no proposal to take her back to the city, Mr. Westbrooke gladly accepting his sister's earnest invitation for Etta to remain with her for several years.

"As long as my life is spared, I will fill as far as I can, a mother's place to Etta," she wrote; "and so far from being a trouble to me, as you seem to fear, she is my greatest pleasure. I could not give her up without great sorrow at parting; and since it seems the wisest course, as you are circumstanced, to leave her with me, let it comfort you to know it is to me the happiest course. She has had no illness of even the most trifling description since she came to Fairhaven, and you may trust me to summon you if ever she seems to droop again, or need another change." And Mr. Westbrooke, knowing he could perfectly trust little Etta's self-appointed guardian, gladly left her in her aunt's kind and most loving care.



## CHAPTER XIII.

*A STRUGGLE AND A VICTORY.*

BUT while Etta was gaining so much in her new home, and free, happy, country life, Mr. Westbrooke and his son were tasting more bitter experience. At first Harry was not conscious of any great change in his own routine of life except that of being more constantly brought into companionship with his father, who grew gradually far less reserved with his son than he had ever before been in his home life.

Sharing the same sittingroom, it was impossible to resist the many temptations to converse with one so well able to enter into the spirit of any interesting discussion as Harry, and from the topics of public moment the transition to matters strictly personal was easy and natural. Often when the cloud upon Mr. Westbrooke's face was the heaviest before the dinner-hour, it would lighten and disappear for a time before Harry's happy face and gleeful account of some schoolboy mishap or pleasant hour's frolic. For the boy was losing all fear of disturbing his father by a conversation, and while



his respect did not waver, he gained confidence every day.

Yet, so gradually that he could scarcely feel the change, Harry was falling into the temptation so strong to all who board, to seek pleasure away from home. When his school hours were over, there was no one to welcome him in the empty rooms, for Mr. Westbrooke always lunched down town. Harry, with his mind wearied by application to his books through the morning, finding no congenial society in the boardinghouse, missing the customary play with Etta or the quiet hour with his aunt, would go out for a walk. His horse had been sold when the house was dismantled, as inconvenient in a boardinghouse life, and while loath to give him up, Harry did not remonstrate against any decision made by his father.

Walking often led his feet towards Walter Meredith's boardinghouse, or to the homes of other companions of his own age, who occupied the same social position. And, lonely and craving sympathy, Harry soon found himself depending greatly upon such friends. They were all lively and pleasant, good company, and very willing to take Harry among them for a share in all their pleasures. Mr. Raymond had consented to the European trip for



Walter, but the departure was postponed until March, as a more favorable season, and the winter was to be devoted to study with a private tutor, and this tutor was often one of the gayest members of the pleasure-seeking parties.

A boating club, that counted Jack Raymond among its members, gave the others cordial welcome, and many a pleasant afternoon in the early fall found Harry one of a boat's crew, pulling from Harlem Bridge to High Bridge to train for some expected regatta, or trying his skill in an outrigger, half-exultant, half-timid. He was surprised that his enthusiastic descriptions of his pleasure had not met with his father's usual inquiry at such times, "Would you not like your own boat, my son?" but concluded some fancy about the amusements being dangerous checked his usual generosity.

Now, too, for the first time in his petted life, his requests for pocket-money often met, not with a refusal, but an excuse: "I'll see about it to-morrow," or "I cannot well spare it to-day, Harry!"

Hesitating to repeat his request, he became less scrupulous about meeting his daily expenses, adding to his bills here or there with a recklessness very natural in a lad who believes his father holds a purse ever full and ever open.



There was no difficulty in obtaining credit, for the rich Mr. Westbrooke's son was well known in the stores where he was accustomed to deal, and his custom was sought upon such terms as best suited him.

But other money matters weighed somewhat more heavily upon him. Keenly sensitive to ridicule, without Aunt Ellen's daily presence and advice to strengthen him, Harry accepted many of the amusements of his companions with little twinges of conscience, but really regarding them as without positive sin or danger. He was resolute in refusing wine and tobacco, but he would not break up a game of whist or euchre where he was the only available fourth hand, and he was fond of showing his skill at billiards and backgammon. Betting was another temptation too frequently indulged in, when the races were in progress or a regatta under discussion, and none of these everyday matters seemed to Harry of sufficient importance to be made the subject of especial thought, far less of earnest prayer.

But when ready-money in his pocket failed, and his companions good-naturedly accepted his pledge of future payment, Harry was too well versed in the usages of society to rest easy under such debt. That



the young scions of fashion probably needed the sums in question far less than the tradesmen whose business was their means of living, never occurred to Harry. These were "debts of honor," he considered, aping the words of his companions, without considering that all debt is a dishonor.

Very often the pleasure of the afternoon, whatever it might be, kept Harry away from home at the dinner hour; and after dining at a restaurant, the evening was usually spent abroad at the opera or in the rooms of his friends. Sometimes it smote the lad's conscience to find his father at a late hour still toiling over papers, and to meet a welcome that was a tacit reproach for his long absence.

At such times he would renew an oft-repeated offer of assistance, that was refused with quiet words of thanks, and a gentle assurance that Mr. Westbrooke was pleased to know his son found enjoyment. "For it is dull here, Harry," he would say with a weary air; "and if I, engrossed in business, find it so, it must be far worse for you, who are young and seek pleasure. Enjoy yourself while you can."

It was after some such speech as this that Harry one evening ventured to remind his father of a promise of money made nearly a week previ-



ous, and was surprised at the reluctance of the reply.

"I can let you have it, Harry, but I wish you would make it go as far as you can."

Harry blushed like a girl, but his customary frankness impelled him at once to acknowledge the truth, however painful. "I am very sorry, sir, but unfortunately I owe the whole of it."

"Owe it! Have I really kept you so long out of pocket-money, my son?"

"You have always been liberal sir, but—I—you see, sir, we play games of chance and skill, and stake some trifling sum to make it interesting, and—"

"Gamble!"

Mr. Westbrooke spoke the word with a short, stern emphasis that fairly startled Harry; but a moment later his face grew deadly pale, and he murmured,

"Boys and men, merchants and gamesters, speculators and pleasure-seekers, gamblers all. Harry, my boy, stop it now, if you would ever prosper. I will not blame you, but rather censure my own neglect in not having spoken to you before."

"But, father, please let me explain. I do not associate with gamblers. My friends are all gentlemen."



"That may be. But when you play games of chance or skill for money, you are gamblers, every one of you."

"It is only to give excitement to the game."

"I understand that perfectly, and also the danger of such amusement as needs this artificial stimulus to excitement. Dice and cards, Harry, have been the ruin of hundreds of men—are the bane of hundreds of youth. Better shun them entirely."

No answer from Harry, who hesitated to bind himself still further by spoken promises. There had been no word spoken to appeal to his higher test of wrong-doing, and he was not quite willing to resign amusements of which he was becoming fonder and fonder. Already he had been complimented by older men upon his cool calculations and brilliant play; and if he lost sometimes, he was as likely to win at other times.

"Make me out a list of your gambling debts," Mr. Westbrooke said, "and I will pay them. But do not let me hear of any more."

Still no word from Harry, rebellious now under what he considered unjust harshness.

"Have you other debts?" his father asked presently.

"Not in my own name, sir. I have added to



your bills at ——," and he named several places where Mr. Westbrooke was accustomed to deal, "but not very heavily."

There was an interval of silence after this, Mr. Westbrooke turning over the leaves of a pocket-diary, while Harry went slowly to his own room. He was angry and miserable, deeply hurt by his father's reproaches, while considering them severe and unjust.

"All gentlemen play billiards and cards," he said to himself, "and father never forbade my doing so. Walter and the others laugh at me now because I will not drink or smoke ; and if I refuse to play, I might as well shut myself up, and not go near the others at all. Why, even at the Debating Club we end the evening with billiards or chess."

He lighted the gas in his room, and his eyes fell upon the Bible, his aunt Ellen's gift. He seemed to see her sweet face and hear her earnest words as she begged of him to make the book his best counsellor and friend, to study and cherish its teachings, and keep his life and heart pure by its lessons.

"I am not in a very Christian frame of mind," he thought, touched with quick self-reproach ; "angry with my own father because he wants me to



abandon a dangerous and expensive amusement. How seldom he has reproved me in my life! And he has never denied me a gratification, even if unreasonable. He must have felt my danger very keenly to have spoken so sternly. And yet I am angry!"

He covered his face with his hands, deeply ashamed of his petulance and ingratitude. Because he was fond of expensive pleasure, anxious to stand well in the eyes of his associates, he had been angry because his father reproved him—irritated because his pleasure was designated by its true name.

Humbled, he knelt down and lifted his heart in silent prayer for forgiveness for his ungrateful and unfilial thoughts, and for strength to keep any promise his father might require of him.

"I promised Aunt Ellen to be a comfort and companion to father," he thought, "and I leave him alone evening after evening, and then make him unhappy by unreasonable demands and sulkingness when reproved. I will try, God helping me, to keep my promise better after to-night."

He looked into the sittingroom, and seeing his father was still there, went slowly forward, and took a chair beside the table. Mr. Westbrooke looked up presently, and said kindly,



"I thought you went to bed, Harry. It is very late."

"I know that, father, but I could not go to bed knowing I had displeased you."

An expression of the most tender affection came upon Mr. Westbrooke's face. "You are too old to be treated like a child, Harry," he said, "and I think you understand perfectly that my fear for you is for your own future welfare. I have seen so much of the danger of card and dice playing, so many young lives wrecked by a gambler's temptations, that I shudder to think of my son standing upon the verge of such a precipice."

"But, father, a friendly game of cards seems to me an innocent way to pass an hour or two pleasantly."

"A friendly game of cards opens the way to the gambling-saloon. You play only with your friends, and your gains and losses are mere trifles—matters of courtesy and honor in payment. But, Harry, my son, I tell you that the most dangerous of all walls for shelter is the wall called 'Moderation.' It is the moderate drinker, who boasts of taking his glass of wine at dinner, never drinking to excess, never tempted to drunkenness, who holds up the most dangerous example to young followers.



They shrink with disgust from the bloated, reeling loafer who begs a dime to spend in a low drinking saloon; but they feel it no degradation to imitate the respectable, well-dressed man who drinks in moderation. So the first glass is taken, and too late they find they have not the power to stop exactly upon the dividing line; they are in a path that ends in self-ruin. So it is with the love of play. It is started by gentlemen who would be horrified at any attempt to cheat, or indignant at being called gamblers. The stakes are trifling, merely to give interest to the amusement, and high play is not at first indulged in. But presently the fever of excitement rages higher, the stakes are increased, the interest becomes almost a frenzy, and the players are drawn into the vortex that makes gamblers. Is it not so?"

The question was asked abruptly, and Harry was obliged to answer, "It is so, sir."

For his father's words recalled many scenes in his friends' rooms that, in some low gambling-saloon might have called for the interference of the police. Angry words had raged, accusations of false play had been made, fierce discussions had taken the place of polite remonstrance, and more than once blows had seemed almost inevitable. Being the



only one of the party not heated by wine, Harry had acted as peacemaker on more than one occasion.

He knew too, that his own love of play had greatly increased in the last few weeks, and that he was often so carried away by either the chagrin of loss or the exultation of gain, that he was willing to risk all he owned for the moment, upon the turning of a card, or the rattle of a dice-box. It proved also his own growing infatuation, that even now he was reluctant to abandon the amusement.

Mr. Westbrooke understood his hesitation, and said gently, but firmly, "It will not do to tamper with it, Harry. Give it up, at once and for ever, if you would really avoid its perils. You think I am unreasonable, after leaving your will unchecked all your life, to put so decided a bar upon your inclinations in a moment. And I do not hold myself blameless. But if in carelessness or engrossing thought I saw you walk to the very verge of a dangerous cliff, should I hesitate then, because you were in more imminent danger, to pluck you back, even if my sudden force gave you sharp pain?"

"I know that you are right," Harry said frankly, but speaking slowly and reluctantly, "and I know too, that you are more than indulgent to me, to reason with me, instead of exercising your au-



thority, and commanding me to cease to play. But it involves more than the mere giving up of dice or cards."

"In what way, Harry?"

"I promised Aunt Ellen to leave wine and tobacco untouched, because," and the lad crimsoned painfully, "I found my senses leaving me more than once, and she knew it."

"But you have kept your promise," Mr. Westbrooke said anxiously.

"I have kept my promise, but I have had to run a gauntlet of ridicule."

"I understand."

"And now, if I refuse to play, all the old taunts about my Puritanical strictness will be revived. You know, father," the lad cried in a sudden burst of boyish confidence, "they are all older than I am, and consider it rather a favor to have me with them. If I attempt to control the amusements, or set myself up as above them in any way, I might as well cease to go with them at all."

"Perhaps that would be the better way."

"I have made no other friends for a long time. If Jack Raymond drops me, I cannot well go to the boat-club, and I would not care to go to the baseball grounds without Walter Meredith."



"Still, my boy, if the requirements of their society lead you into the formation of dangerous and vicious habits, you had better give them up."

It was a dreary prospect to a boy suddenly deprived of his home and such companionship as it afforded, to be asked to also give up his entire circle of friends. Harry's face was very long as he said, "I will do whatever you require, father."

"That is a brave boy," said his father. "Believe me, I am more reluctant to ask you to resign any pleasure than you are to grant my request. But we are talking too long. Good-night, my son." And the warm pressure of his father's hand, the cordial tone of his voice, somewhat repaid Harry for his sacrifice. He went to his own room, more at ease in his conscience, but he missed the real comfort that his aunt Ellen had always left with him.

For the sake of avoiding loss, for the worldly and moral danger, his father had spoken against the habit of play. To please his father only, Harry had determined to separate himself from his companions. But there was not the deep abiding sense of comfort he felt when, after Aunt Ellen's gentle remonstrances, she pointed out to him where he offended his Maker in disobeying his



laws, and then led him by her earnest pleadings to resign his pursuit of pleasure, not from expediency, not from fear of mortal peril, but for Christ's sake, to please his Heavenly Father by obedience to his will. But now, keener than the fear of his companions' ridicule, sharper than the sense of personal sacrifice, awoke in his heart a sense of the sin of his recent course, and of the peril of intimacy with irreligious associates. He also felt more deeply than ever before a yearning for sympathy from his father in his endeavor to lead a Christian life, to meet the requirements of a consistent follower of the Redeemer.

There was a sorer consciousness of utter loneliness in the lad's heart when he knelt for his evening prayer than he had ever felt in his short life before. His mother's death, his aunt's absence, the loss of his dearly-loved little sister, were all lighter burdens than this want of sympathy with his father, in what he felt was a matter of the deepest import to him for life and for eternity.

But this earthly support and help failing him Harry turned with a pleading prayer to that Father who never fails his children, who calls them to him through all temptation and trial, and sets a never-failing light to guide their faltering steps, a



sure staff to support their wavering hearts. He prayed fervently, yet half fearing that he might be wanting in filial reverence, as he implored that the heart of his father also might be turned to his God, and that their earthly companionship might be enriched by a spiritual sympathy and mutual support.



## CHAPTER XIV.

*NEW PROSPECTS FOR HARRY.*

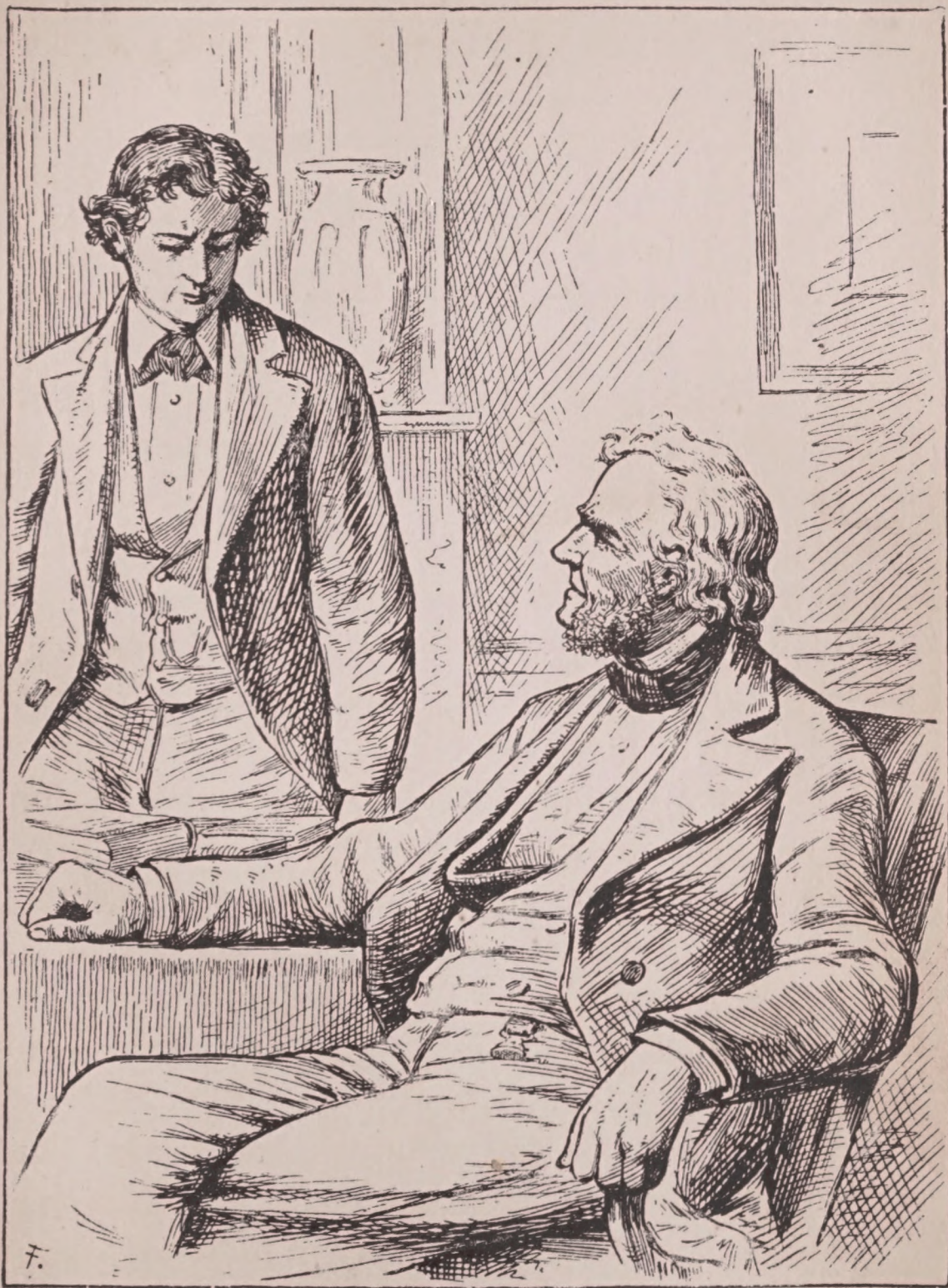
THE following day, when Harry came in from a brisk walk in a chill October air, with nearly an hour still to spare before dinner, he was surprised to find his father in the sittingroom, evidently waiting for his return. A fire was lighted for the first time in the open grate, and gave a cheery home-look to the room, very pleasant to meet.

"I thought we would need a fire this evening, Harry," Mr. Westbrooke said, "if you are not going out."

"I have written a note to excuse myself for breaking my engagement for this evening," Harry replied, determined not to think regretfully of the euchre party he had promised to join. "I must meet the Raymonds and Walter once or twice more to pay my obligations, but I will not tax you again for—gambling debts."

It was not easy to say the two last words ; but Harry did not want for moral courage, and having determined to look the temptation full in the face he also resolutely called it by its right name.











"I wanted to talk with you, Harry," Mr. Westbrooke said presently, as his son came from his own bedroom, divested of hat, boots, and overcoat, and settled himself in an easy-chair, with his slippers feet crossed before the fireplace, "about some changes I propose to make for your future."

Harry's heart bounded. He had more than once intimated his own preference for a European trip instead of a college course. Was his sacrifice of the night before to be rewarded by his father's sanction to a year or two of foreign travel, with a private tutor? The look of eager expectation in the young face smote Mr. Westbrooke with a sharp pain, and dictated the next words he spoke: "I am afraid my proposal will not please you, Harry, at first, but I hope to convince you that it is the best plan to adopt."

The eager look faded to one of respectful attention; but Harry did not speak.

"As you are to be a man of business, my son," Mr. Westbrooke said, "I think it will be better to give up the college course, and enter at once upon business education under my own tuition. That is, to begin to help me in such leisure hours as you have, and in your intervals of study."

"Leaving the Academy?" asked Harry faintly.



“Leaving the Academy in December. Your tuition is paid for up to Christmas. You have already what is considered a good education, Harry, and you will not need a course of classic study to be my assistant.”

He did not say partner, but Harry was too much stunned to notice the omission. It was not merely that all his schemes and plans for actual study were made useless, that the lad listened in dismay to this change of plan. That was painful; but the proposal to enter upon a business life at once was far more so. Such of the dry details as Harry had seen, in some few hours' writing for his father, had revived all his first disgust against business.

He had thought of the proposed partnership as a necessary stepping-stone to the enjoyment of greater luxury and wealth than he had ever yet possessed; had built boyish air-castles of future eminence as a great merchant, a millionaire, living upon Fifth avenue in even greater magnificence than his father had done. He had never calculated to grow old and careworn in the pursuit of this wealth, but upon the foundation that his father had built to enter upon schemes and speculations only to be controlled by great capitalists, and enjoy his income as well as increase it.



And even this visionary prospect of a business life Harry set far ahead, after college-days were over, after a trip to Europe, after, weary with study and sight-seeing, he would be willing to enter upon more serious duties.

To have all these pleasant dreams so rudely broken; to be told his business education must commence at seventeen, fairly staggered the lad. He did not speak; but the tender, sad eyes watching his face read its varying expression very clearly.

Every word Mr. Westbrooke spoke was well weighed, and spoken with slow emphasis, and also with the painful consciousness that he was not dealing frankly with his son, but keeping back the strongest motive for his resolution. "I think you will find much of the work very easy," he said, "for I notice in what you have already done for me that you write rapidly and accurately, and are quick in the use of figures—both good foundations for a good bookkeeper or clerk."

"Clerk!" Harry cried, aghast.

"You will need a clerk's education," said Mr. Westbrooke, "before you will be fit to fill any responsible position. And Poulson is the very man to give you a good start. Do they teach book-keeping at the Academy?"



"Yes, sir, for those who wish to learn it," said Harry, in a proud, hurt tone. "I never supposed you wished me to enter that class, and Mr. Huber never asked me to do so."

"You had better join it to-morrow. Learn what you can there, even if you neglect some of the other studies. You are a good French scholar?"

"They tell me so, sir."

"That is well. Modern languages are always useful. And now tell me what spare time you have while you remain at school."

"I study about two hours at home, sir. It makes no difference to me whether I take afternoon or evening hours."

"Let it be afternoon then for the present, and I will employ your evenings."

Harry assented, and then looked into the glowing coals as if to read there the motives for such a sudden overthrow of all the schemes before made for the future. Never guessing the true motive, which he was soon to learn, he thought he saw one that hurt his pride, and made him feel with keen mortification that he was not fully and heartily trusted. Having given his promise the night before without reservation; having strengthened his resolution by prayer, he felt hurt beyond expression



as he became more and more certain that his father doubted either the sincerity of his words or his ability to resist temptation. As the thought pressed more heavily, he said very abruptly, "Father!"

"Well?" asked his father, startled at the rebellious face suddenly confronting him.

"Is all this new plan to keep me out of mischief?"

"To keep you out of mischief?" said Mr. Westbrooke, honestly puzzled.

"To employ my time so fully that there will be no opportunity to break the promises I made you last night?"

"Harry, I am afraid you are a self-tormentor. Do not cultivate a suspicious heart, my son."

Then more kindly the father said, stretching out his hand, "I never doubted you for one moment, Harry, or thought of giving you any further safeguard than your own principles and resolution."

"Thank you, sir," Harry said, his face brightening. "I could not bear to think you felt the need of tying me up like a child. And now that we have spoken of it, I think I do need just such a safeguard as employment will be to me. My time hangs upon my hands very heavily, and will do so



more than ever, if I cut myself off from my old associates."

"I do not want to overtax you."

"But I will be glad to help you, if I can. Since we are one day to be Westbrooke & Son," said Harry, with an assumed air of importance, "we will make the junior partner a member of the firm capable of lightening somewhat the labors of the senior. I am not given to sentiment, father, but I know how hard you have worked for all of us, and I intend, as soon as I am capable, to relieve you of some of your cares and labors."

Mr. Westbrooke smiled faintly, but did not reply at once to this little outburst of boyish enthusiasm, and Harry, a little chilled by his reception of words he intended to express a hearty desire to do his whole duty, stared into the fire again, wondering if he had made himself ridiculous.

"I dare say father is laughing at me," he thought, looking shyly into a face that certainly had no merriment in it. "The idea of a boy of seventeen thinking he can carry any of the business schemes and cares that so harass an old and experienced merchant. How conceited he must think I am! And I meant to show him that I was not reluctant to fall in with all his wishes! How dread-



fully pale he is, and how old he looks ! It must be grieving for mother and for home. I wish I could really be of any use to him, could really comfort him."

And with his whole heart going out to his father, Harry caught his eye, and met a smile that had no touch of ridicule, but was full of tenderest affection. Only two words followed the smile, as Mr. Westbrooke said, "My son !"

It was his favorite form of address, and from his lips was like a caress, it was so calmly tender. Harry knew when he heard it that his father had accepted his outburst of affection and self-denial in the same spirit that had prompted him to speak. "I have some very complicated affairs pressing upon me just now," said Mr. Westbrooke presently, "in which I need unquestioning assistance. Reasons which I cannot now explain prevent me from trusting the accounts and papers I am working upon to Poulson, and he would be offended if I took an inexperienced clerk into my confidence. I do not wish to hurt the feelings of an old and faithful clerk, such as Poulson has been for years. So, if you will lend me your mind and fingers for a few evenings, Harry, you can be of material assistance to me."

"I will do all I can, gladly," was the prompt re-



ply, "and I will join the bookkeeping class to-morrow, and drop Greek for the present."

"Yes, that will be best. The dinner-bell! I suppose you have a good appetite after your walk."

"It is generally in pretty good order," said Harry, smiling, "though Mrs. Dalton cannot quite equal Adolph."

"One seldom meets French cooking in a boardinghouse, I imagine, and simpler food is better for young folks. I think one-half of Etta's improved health may be traced to plain country fare. Did you have a letter to-day?"

"Yes, sir! Both Aunt Ellen and Etta are well. Etta has been taking nutting excursions with David, and finding what she calls 'chessnus in sticky balls,' translated by Aunt Ellen into chestnut burrs."

"Those old chestnut-trees!" said Mr. Westbrooke, "they were the delight of my boyhood, Harry. Many a day I have spent nutting, with my slice of bread and butter, apple-turnover and cookies taken out of my bag or basket to make room for the nuts. You city boys miss many a delight! To think that you are seventeen and never drove oxen nor fished with a crooked pin, took horses to water nor waded after pond-lilies. We must go to



Fairhaven, my son, and see Etta next summer, and I will show you all the spots your father loved years ago. Ellen tells me there is very little change in the old place, though all my boyhood's friends are dead or gone away."

They were ready for dinner as Mr. Westbrooke spoke, and Harry wondered what old nurse's story was pressing on his mind, to make him remember having heard that old men, when life was nearly over, always recalled longingly the scenes of their childhood. It might have been the evident feebleness of his father's step, the stoop in his shoulders, the haggard expression of his eyes, that so roused the boy's fears; but the dread that had occurred to him frequently in the last few weeks was deepened by those few regretful words, suggested by Etta's baby pleasures.

As soon as dinner was over, Mr Westbrooke, opening his secretary, took out some papers covered with figures wonderfully like schoolboy problems in arithmetic.

Selecting several sheets, he explained to Harry the way in which the calculations were to be compared and proved correct or erroneous, but he made no explanation of the purpose for which they were required. With earnest wish to



be of use, Harry worked conscientiously and steadily until the clock struck ten, when his father put his hand over the last calculation. "I will release you now, Harry," he said. "It is late enough for young folks to work."

And Harry, with a long yawning stretch, rose to his feet, thinking of two hours' study still before him. "I won't bother father with that," he thought, "but to-morrow I will get the lessons out of the way before dinner."

"Are they right, sir?" he asked, seeing that Mr. Westbrooke was examining his work.

"Yes, very well done. They will lighten this evening's work very much. Thank you, and good-night."

"Good-night!" said Harry, going into his own room, and closing the door. But, when his lessons were learned, and he turned off the gas, before closing his eyes, he could see by the bright light striking through the ventilator over his door, that his father was in the sittingroom still, and probably writing busily as usual.



## CHAPTER XV.

*MORE CHANGES.*

FOR more than a month Harry found all his evening hours fully occupied in assisting his father, and still worked busily at his own studies in the hour before dinner. His old companions shrugged their shoulders and wondered what new freak Westbrooke had ; but they gave him only a passing annoyance.

Blindly as he worked, giving his father, as requested, unquestioning obedience and assistance, ignorant as he was of business, Harry was far too intelligent not to understand very soon that there was trouble brooding over his father's business. Night after night, when the first morning hours were striking, the lad could hear his father's steps as he paced up and down the sittingroom, absorbed in painful thought.

He knew too, that the many long calculations submitted to him represented investments in speculations that were falling one after another into ruin. What proportion of the wealth he had once



believed inexhaustible was so involved, it was impossible for an inexperienced boy to estimate, but that there was heavy loss involved, he could not avoid seeing. His father gave him no confidence, however, when placing his evening's work before him, and it was contrary to Harry's habit of respectful deference to ask any questions.

But, boy as he was, he could not but see that the mental anxiety his father carried so silently was seriously undermining his health. He had grown old faster in the last six months than in any previous six years of his prosperous life, and Harry longed for the power to comfort him by sympathy, if not by more effective help. Many nights, hearing the slow footfall passing his door in the weary, monotonous tramp, to and fro, he longed to go out and ask to share the burden pressing so sorely upon his father's heart and mind. But the natural timidity of his years, the fear of seeming intrusive, held him back, and he would lie quiet in earnest, silent prayer for the right path to be shown him, to lead to a more perfect sympathy with the parent he loved.

November was over, and the days of December, short and cold, were closing in early, when one evening, after dinner, Mr. Westbrooke declined his son's offer of the customary assistance. "You can



wait here if you will," he said, "in case I need you ; but just now I must write some letters."

One of these, Harry could not avoid seeing, was directed to his aunt Ellen, and although it was not very long, it occupied much time. Mr. Westbrooke wrote deliberately at all times, but over the words to his sister his pen lingered long, while with his head resting upon his left-hand he sank into deep revery, his face marked with signs of suffering, painfully apparent to the young watcher, who, unobtrusive and silent, could not give full attention to any book or thought, though he would not interrupt his father.

But after his dismissal at ten o'clock, he could not rest. Without undressing, he turned out his gas, and sat upon the side of the bed, too anxious to sleep, and yet unwilling to have any appearance of watching his father.

The moments passed slowly, and Harry was beginning to feel drowsy, when he was roused to perfect wakefulness by a low moan from the sitting-room. It was a sound full of misery even more painful to hear than the groan that proceeds from physical pain, and Harry softly opened his door and looked out.

Mr. Westbrooke was seated exactly where he



had left him, but his head was bent upon his outstretched arms, and he was shaken by tearless sobs. Harry could bear it no longer. "If I am not yet a man," he thought, "I am his son, and all he has here to comfort him." Softly he crossed the room, and Mr. Westbrooke, absorbed in his own unhappy thoughts, was unaware of his presence, till he felt a loving arm steal around his neck, and lifted his head to see Harry standing beside him, his face beautiful in its earnest love and sympathy.

"Father," he said, his voice trembling with emotion, "let me share your trouble. If I cannot help you, let me at least bear something of the burden that is killing you. I know I am young, inexperienced, and of little use to you; but we are all alone in the world, and I cannot bear to see you so unhappy."

"My son!"

The old tender words of affection brought the tears to Harry's eyes, but he fought them back bravely. "I think," he said, "that you are afraid of paining me, father, that you are silent only to spare me."

"Ah, my boy, my boy!" said Mr. Westbrooke sadly, "may you never carry the burden of remorse that I carry to-night. For your sake, Harry, to



start my son in the business with a large capital and a great show, I broke through the rules of my business life, and invested in promising speculations. Then, finding some of these disastrous, I plunged deeper and deeper into what is only business gambling. While reproaching and warning you, Harry, I have walked with open eyes into the same ruinous vortex."

"And lost heavily," said Harry, very pale, but bravely confronting this confirmation of his fears.

"Heavily!" said Mr. Westbrooke, in a hoarse voice. "I have lost *all*. I am a ruined man."

Harry gave an involuntary cry of dismay. This was far worse than his most gloomy anticipations. *All*. What did that mean? Absolute poverty! Youth's vivid imagination pictured the worst—a struggle for the very necessities of life. He could not speak, but his father, having once broken through the long silence, was relieved now by opening his heart fully to his only son.

"You need not feel it very deeply, as yet, Harry," he said, "for I shall send you to Fairhaven. I wrote to your aunt Ellen this evening, for, my boy, I cannot keep off the crash another day. The price of the house, the proceeds of the daily orders, every available dollar has gone to meet pressing demands,



and to-morrow I must speak plainly, and say I cannot meet my liabilities."

"That means—" faltered Harry.

"I must fail! But I am no coward. I will meet my creditors fairly, give up all I have, and start, at seventy-two, upon a new life."

"But not alone," said Harry, standing erect and manly; "your son is beside you, father."

"Ah, Harry, you are too young yet to take up the burden of life."

"I am seventeen, sir, almost a man! Let me put this letter in the grate, father, and stay with you. I will not be a burden upon you. I can surely find some employment in this great city."

"I do not think you fully understand me yet, Harry," said Mr. Westbrooke sadly; "I must give up these rooms, and live in some cheap boarding-house until I can arrange my affairs. You will be far more comfortable with your aunt Ellen and Etta."

Aunt Ellen and Etta! Can you appreciate the sacrifice Harry Westbrooke made when he resolutely turned his thoughts from the homesick longing he had felt for weeks for the sight of those dear faces, to say, very quietly, but firmly, "My comfort should not be the first consideration at such a time,



father. If you tell me that I shall be an annoyance or hindrance to you in any way, I will accept your decision and go to Fairhaven, hoping to be of use to you in the future. But if I can help you, or even be any comfort to you, I hope you will let me stay. I am not such a baby that I shall fret for dainty food and fine rooms."

"Ah, Harry, you have no experience of hardship."

"And because you have made my life easy and happy, I am to run away and leave you to bear your troubles alone! Father," and the boy's arm once more stole round his father's neck, and his voice took the coaxing tone in which he had petitioned for all childhood's favors, "let me stay with you."

Mr. Westbrooke did not answer at once. It had given him the only comfort he had in those troubled weeks to feel that, if the crash could not be averted, his sister's small fortune was safe, and would give a home to his children. In the quiet home at Fairhaven Harry could accustom himself to the idea of a life of self-dependence, and gradually lose those habits of luxury that had been customary from his infancy. It was the sole rest in the old merchant's thought of the gloomy work before him. And yet the pressure of those loving



arms, the sight of that earnest face, the sound of the pleading voice, proved irresistible, for presently Mr. Westbrooke said, "So far from being an annoyance to me, Harry, you will be more comfort than I can tell you, if only by being near me. I am an old man to be left utterly alone."

"Then you will let me stay?"

"As long as you are contented."

"Thank you. You will not find me adding to your troubles by complaints. It may be that we will not find matters so bad as you fear."

"Ah, Harry, do not indulge in false hopes. The fears are certainties now. But I think that I can save my good name, boy; and perhaps, if allowed time, I can start again where I started many long years ago. It will be up-hill work, and I am not so strong as I was in those days. Yet"—and already his tone was more hopeful, having spoken the worst—"it may be, Harry, that I can train my son to carry on the old establishment, though not as I hoped to start him. You have a good clear head, Harry, and quick fingers. You will start, even without one dollar, with more cheering prospects than your father did. It is hard, Harry, very hard, after more than fifty years of toil and success, to see all my prosperity slip by me. Hardest of all



to think that I have impoverished my children. What have I done to be so punished?"

"Aunt Ellen says," said Harry, trembling a little at his own temerity, "that earthly afflictions are not sent as punishments but as God's messengers."

There was no answer, but Mr. Westbrooke turned his face aside, and covered it with his hand, while Harry, still timidly trying to recall his aunt's teachings, continued in a low voice: "She says that when God sees that our hearts are turning from him, he sends the messenger of trouble, to make us feel our dependence upon his goodness, and warn us from the way of forgetfulness of him. Forgive me, father, if I remind you of what you must know better than I can tell you."

"What else did your aunt say?" asked a choked voice.

"She told me so many things to remember if ever trouble should come, father, that I could never repeat half of them. In our health and while there is only happiness in our lives, she said our Heavenly Father's blessings were often forgotten; but that if we should bring our hearts to him then, we should find trouble was lighter when it came, because we should know it was sent in love and not in anger."



In love ! Mr. Westbrooke shuddered as the boy spoke. How had he treated his Heavenly Father's love in the long years of manhood, when he had turned away from all holy thought or duty, to give his life to the gathering up of that wealth now gone from him. If indeed affliction was God's messenger to draw wayward hearts to him, surely the strongest of all pleas must move the old merchant's heart : for the idol he had worshipped through life lay crushed and ruined at his feet ; the service of Mammon had proved a broken reed.

Would the service of God so fail him, if even at that late day, he entered into it, humbly and devoutly ? Was his wife's death one of the messengers sent, and his sister's visit another, to win Harry's young heart, and make him such a tender loving petitioner for his father's soul ? Still keeping his face hidden, Mr. Westbrooke said, " Do you find help in your Bible, Harry ? Is it there you have sought strength for some past trials you remember well ? "

" Yes, father. "

" Bring it here ! Read to me where you will. "

With the most earnest prayer of his young life, Harry brought the sacred volume from his bedroom, and opened its pages. His voice was low,



but sweet, and clear, as in the profound silence of the room, he read :

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

“My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

“He will not suffer thy foot to be moved ; he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

“Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

“The LORD is thy keeper ; the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.

“The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

“The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil ; he shall preserve thy soul.

“The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.”

There was no word spoken when the words of the Psalmist were ended, and Harry could only see that his father's hand still shaded his face, as he sat motionless in his arm chair. He hesitated to break the silence, but turned the leaves of his Bible with so gentle a hand, that their soft rustling was scarcely heard. It was very late, and before many



hours morning would come, and yet the boy hesitated to leave his father, although beginning to feel the great weariness that follows strong excitement.

"If only he would speak," Harry thought. "He is not asleep, for he moves his fingers."

Still the silence continued, until once more the lad's own clear voice broke it, as from the page open before him he read :

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Then having finished the lines, Harry rose, and pressing his lips silently upon the hand hanging over the arm of his father's chair, went silently to his own room, closing the door after him. But the day dawn, while Harry slept peacefully, found Mr. Westbrooke with his son's Bible open before him, seeking comfort and help where alone it could be found, humbling himself before his God, for his sin and ingratitude, imploring pardon through the Redeemer, and praying earnestly that his afflictions might indeed lead him into the path of everlasting life.



## CHAPTER XVI.

*THE YOUNG CLERK'S TRIALS.*

ALTHOUGH the next few months did not positively bring into reality Harry's visions of actual poverty and distress, they were sore troubles to his sensitive nature. He left school at Christmas, and entered upon his duty of aiding his father, with his whole heart in his work, and his face ever brave and cheerful to meet that father's anxious eyes. But every change that led down the ladder of fortune was a blow keenly felt.

Mr. Westbrooke made no reservations in his statement to his creditors, or his renunciation of his property. The expensive library was sold, the pictures and bronzes; and with only their clothing, and some few trifles of personal property, father and son moved from their handsome rooms to a single one upon the third floor of a boardinghouse in Brooklyn, where economy was the chief recommendation.

One grand sacrifice Harry made nobly—giving up all thought of Fairhaven, Aunt Ellen, and Etta, bravely to remain with his father; and had they



lived in a garret, the martyr spirit would probably have remained to support the boy. But after seeing books, pictures, and bronzes carried away; after packing up what remained and getting established in the new boardinghouse, life seemed to have suddenly lost all savor. There was no further call for active sacrifice, no excitement to sustain the heart even in sore pain, only a dull routine of utterly distasteful employment, and a life of entire discomfort.

Mr. Westbrooke's creditors were willing to allow him a stated time to endeavor to meet his engagements, and the business was continued, but with greatly reduced capital, a much smaller corps of clerks and salesmen, and with the closest economy in every detail. Remorseful for that wild year of speculation that had wrecked the profits of a long life of steady business application, Mr. Westbrooke determined to redeem his fortunes, if possible, by taking up the self-denials of his youth, and working his way up once more over the same path then trodden so successfully.

But he could not fully realize, with all his tender paternal love, how much more severe this discipline was to Harry than it had ever been to him. A robust, strong, country lad, accustomed to the



daily toil of farm-life, to early rising, to simple food, he had come to the city prepared to work his way to fortune. The sacrifices that he made were but the means of growth to his self-reliant spirit and his strong desire to win independence; and as he grew older, the habits of economy were so firmly implanted in his life that they had ceased to be sacrifices. Indeed, he was spoken of more than once contemptuously as a man who hoarded his wealth, until after his marriage.

Then, with his love for his beautiful wife, there sprang up a generosity that prompted him to lavish upon her and upon their children every luxury that wealth could give, every indulgence love could suggest. Yet, in the midst of all this splendor, Mr. Westbrooke himself was almost a hermit in his library, and would often rise from a table loaded with the choicest dainties, after eating sparingly of bread and milk, or a selection of such simple food as he could find. Therefore, when, after nearly twenty years of lavish expenditure, that was a delight to himself only so far as it gave pleasure to those he loved, he again took up his old habits of close economy and steady industry, he simply fell back into a groove that fitted him well.

But with Harry it was all new, distasteful, and



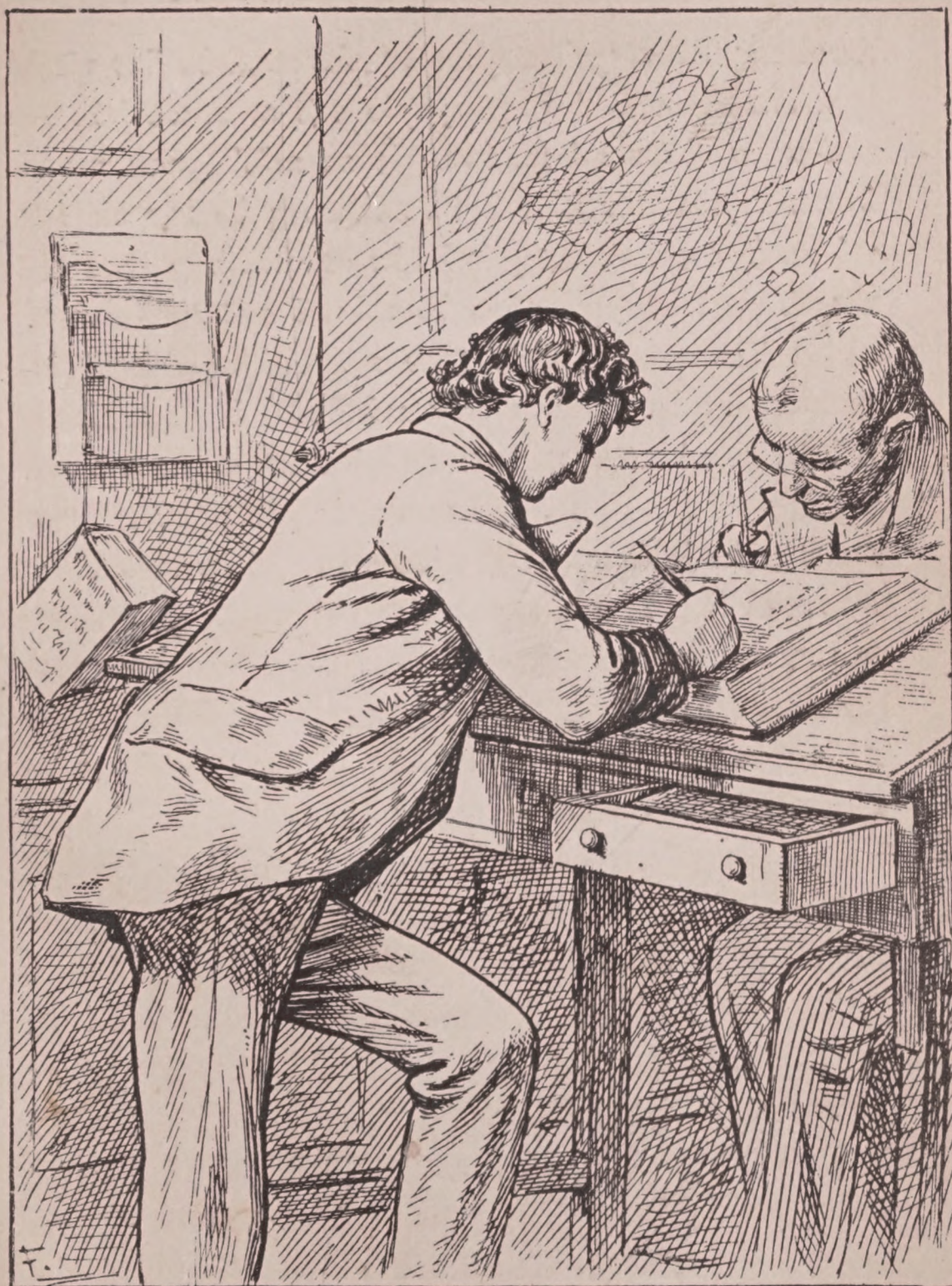
toilsome. Early rising was disagreeable to him; he turned disgusted from their plain food, too often badly cooked; he was cramped in the single, poorly-furnished room. Mr. Poulson, who undertook his business training, was an old man, with no ambition beyond faithful service to his employer, a faultless set of books, and strict punctuality in every duty.

Deeply aggrieved at Mr. Westbrooke's withdrawal of all confidence in his disastrous speculations, sorely hurt at the downfall of the "house" that had so long kept up a prosperous career, the old man's temper was sour, and he was harsh and exacting in his demands upon Harry, making scant allowance for the boy's inexperience and former self-indulgent habits.

The small countingroom, high desk, and dreary routine of monotonous duty, were hard to endure in place of the wide, airy schoolroom, and the hum of young voices. And the praises of all his teachers made Poulson's continual fault-finding very much harder to endure.

Yet Harry had a true manly spirit of self-respect; and having once taken up his task voluntarily, he would not harass his father by complaints. He tried to learn all that was required of him well,











and his rapid penmanship and really accurate knowledge of figures made him far more valuable than Poulson would ever acknowledge.

One word of cordial praise would have helped the lad immensely; and had he known he was really extremely useful and learning his business rapidly, he would have been far more contented and spurred forward to still further efforts.

But Poulson did not believe in "making boys too conceited," and his grumbling dampened all Harry's ardor, and reduced his work to the level of drudgery. And when, weary and discouraged, he came to his room to spend the evenings, his father would again call upon him, and often in his absorbed attention to the business in hand, utterly forget even to thank Harry for prompt and well-performed service. Straining every faculty to meet his new engagements, to bring his business up to its old standpoint, throwing his whole heart once more into his work, Mr. Westbrooke also fell back into habits of deep thought, entirely forgetting, for the time being, even the existence of his son.

Had Harry been in an independent position, with certain daily service to render to a stranger for a stipulated salary, he could have better endured the actual work performed, and felt the nat-



ural ambition to fill his position well and rise to a higher one.

But he had no regular duty and no salary. Each day Poulson put before him the writing or accounts that seemed to him best fitted for the lad, or that best lightened his own work. Now it was a list of entries to be made in one of the great ledgers ; now bills to make out ; now invoices to be verified and copied ; now long columns of figures to be footed up ; now papers to be compared : sometimes one class of work running on regularly for several days, sometimes a change every hour, and no explanation of either to the young clerk. And if he became bewildered, Poulson's grumbling about "a whipper-snapper of a boy who does n't know the multiplication-table," was rather hard to endure by the head mathematician of the Academy.

There was no loving mother to speak gentle words of encouragement, and Harry's heart often failed him. But for that never-failing comfort he found in his morning and evening hour of reading and prayer, the lad's courage must have given way in those dark winter days that followed the new year's entrance. It made his discipline more severe that Mr. Westbrooke, after that one night of confidence, said no more to Harry about his busi-



ness perplexities or prospects, and the lad knew nothing of what clouds hung over the future, or what hopes there were to cheer them.

Spring opened and a new difficulty arose. With a very natural desire to help in the close economy that he believed a necessity, seeing his father submit uncomplainingly to the same privations that he himself endured—the single room, the coarse table, the utterly uncongenial society in the house—Harry had resolutely refrained from asking for any money, and carefully husbanded what his father from time to time placed in his hands. These sums were trifling, totally unlike the handsome allowances of pocket-money given him ever since he was able to carry a pocketbook; and Harry learned many hard lessons of self-denial in their use. It was a trifling matter to pass the jeweller's store, the confectioner's, and the fancygoods dealer's, where once he had been a welcome customer, spending freely and carelessly. But often the lad's pampered stomach turned with absolute loathing from the food before him, and he sighed deeply as he thought a meal at a restaurant was quite out of his present reach. The bookstores were another great temptation, for Harry was fond of light as well as solid literature; and although French nov-



els had been long before abandoned in disgust, there were constant tempting relays of new works that he would have greatly enjoyed in his few leisure hours.

Worst of all, as the spring days opened, Harry found his summer wardrobe would not meet his present demands. "Why need I have grown so?" he thought ruefully, as he stood before the mirror, making a most remarkable display of ankles and wrists in a handsome suit he had entirely outgrown. "Here are five suits, and not one that I can wear. I shall certainly melt in my heavy suit before many days, and I can't bear to ask father for money. My shirts are in a bad way, too, and my washerwoman's stitches look as if she sewed with a sail-needle. Heigho! I have half a mind to go to Fairhaven," he thought, "for I am not of any use here. Poulson finds everything I do altogether wrong, and talks to me as if I was little better than an idiot, though I do my very best. If I was careless or stupid, I might hope to improve; but when I do the best I can, and do not see the deficiencies, it is utterly hopeless to try ever to please him. If I had been offered a thousand dollars for the accounts he gave me to do to-day, I could not have tried any harder to have them right, made the col-



umns straighter, or taken more pains to have them neat. And if I had blotted and smeared every page, made every column foot up incorrectly, or gone to sleep over them, he could scarcely have found them worse. And he must know, after sitting at that desk more than twenty-five years, whether the work is well done or not. It is of no use to try! I am just a bother and a hindrance in the office!"

A bitter, humiliating reflection, when the beginning had been made with such a proud hope of being so truly useful that his father need never employ any other clerk in his place.

"And I am no comfort to father," was the next forlorn thought. "I don't believe he knows half the time whether I am in the room or not. If he wants me to write for him, I might as well be a copying-machine, for he just passes the papers over and takes them back, without one word of blame or praise. To be sure, he don't find any fault, but that may be because he don't like to hurt my feelings. I dare say they are all wrong, too. I wish I had begun a poor boy. It is awfully hard to give up such a life as mine."

But here Harry gave himself a little moral shaking: "Repining, man! That wont do!" Yet he was too much depressed to rally at once, and pres-



ently a new train of thought started also a new humiliation. "That was a decided 'cut' of Raymond's to-day! Very pleasant, after the way he sought my acquaintance so long. I'm more than thankful that father let me pay off all my debts to the fellows, but they needn't be so very stiff. Of course the failure was known all over the city, and I'm not the rich Mr. Westbrooke's son any more; but I couldn't have cut one of them if they were in mere money trouble. If I had disgraced myself, I should deserve it; but because I am poor and slightly shabby, they find it convenient to avoid me, or, as Raymond did to-day, look straight into my face, as if he had never seen it before. Meredith dodges me. That is mean. I've seen him dart into stores when he saw me coming, or see something to call his undivided attention in a window. Bah! He needn't put himself out. I can build up as honorable a name as he can, yet, if I can't rattle so much money in my pocket. And, by-the-way, Wiley's a good fellow. He met me as cordially—no, he met me far more cordially than ever he has done—yesterday, and was as delicate as possible in that little hint that he considered his purse his friend's purse at all times. And now I think of it, he asked me, if he could ever serve me



in a business way, to call on him. I wonder if he could get me something to do, some work that would be worth a salary, however small. I am not one bit of use to father, but if I could earn something, I might take the expense of my clothes myself, and save him a little."

This thought, once started, was encouraged, and Harry brightened under it. To be of some actual use, were it only in saving an expense, was far more cheering to contemplate than the doleful idea that he was only an annoyance in his father's counting-room, tolerated in the vain hope that he might one day be of some service.

"I'll ask father about it as soon as he comes in," thought Harry, who was alone for the evening, Mr. Westbrooke having gone over to New York upon business, "and see if he is willing to have me speak to Wiley about it. Father works harder than ever, and yet he does not look half so sick and old as he did last fall. It must be because he has no doubt now, I think. He was trying to carry two loads, and now he has made his statements and started fresh. How hard that must be at his age! Poor father! I wish I could really help him. Ten o'clock! I might as well go to bed. I'm too tired to start anything to do now, and I must hang up all



these clothes. It seems a pity to throw away those suits. There's not a break in one of them. How Meredith admired that gray check, and how I teased him about where I got the vest-pattern! After all, I am glad that I am out of that set, even if my pride does suffer. I think God saw that I was being ruined with idleness and love of pleasure, and wanted to show me some nobler end in life than balancing a billiard-cue daintily, or recollecting every card played in a game of whist. I begin to understand that a man may devote his energies to something more important than the cut of a vest or the pattern of a necktie. But I shall never like mercantile life, I know. Just as soon as I am a man, and have sufficient income to meet my daily expenses, I mean to study to be a lawyer or a physician. I do believe," and here the lad spoke aloud, standing erect in the small room, "I do believe it would kill me to spend my whole time in that counting-room, balancing ledgers and writing out accounts."

Then, half laughing at the sound of his own energetic voice breaking the silence, Harry picked up the clothes scattered on bed and chairs, shook them out with a mournful sigh, and hung them in the closet.



When the room was neat again, suiting the fastidious taste that kept even the humble apartment in perfect order, Harry opened his Bible and read some of the Psalms. He was very fond of those glorious inspirations, seldom omitting to read one at least, even when he had been reading other portions of the Holy Scriptures. And each night and morning he took one verse into his heart for his rest and comfort through his waking meditation before sleep, or during the frequently vexatious trials of his daytime duties. Poulson little dreamed how often a hasty or disrespectful answer was driven back from Harry's lips by the earnest recalling of the passage committed to memory, that brought self-restraint, even if it was entirely inappropriate to the occasion, for every word of Divine teaching reminded Harry of his Christian duty, although the special sense of those in his mind might be foreign to the emergency. Aunt Ellen had told him that this committing of one verse to memory morning and evening had been her own habit from childhood, till there was scarcely a text that was not familiar to her, or an occasion when she could not find in her memory the words of advice or comfort to meet it. Harry remembered several times when, without seeming to preach to him, she had



spoken a few words that met exactly the need in his heart, brought him comfort in hours of sharp self-reproach, or gave him strength for some conflict of inclination and duty.

Upon this night, as he closed his Bible and knelt to pray, Harry repeated the verse he had chosen for the day: "The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants, and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."

It took the sting from all his thought of his apparently useless efforts, and the slights of his former friends. This world's trials humbly borne, there would be another life for the servants of the Lord, such as Harry tried meekly to be; and sure of his trust in God, he rested upon the promise that he should never be desolate.

It was doubly precious so to trust when he was so utterly alone in every worldly sense, with no hand to grasp his own in true cordial sympathy, no loving voice to greet his waking or his going to rest. For his father, never caressing, did not at all realize how the boy craved outward tokens of affection, and withheld them, not from any want of love, but simply in utter ignorance of their value.

Determined to retrieve his fallen fortunes, working for his son's interest in the future firm far



more than for his own sake, Mr. Westbrooke gave Harry constant thoughts of deepest affection. In his hours of prayer, now frequent and sincere, the names of his children were ever uttered in words of fervent supplication, and had an accusation been made of careless disregard for his son to the old merchant, it would have been met with a most truthful and astonished denial. Without exaggeration he could have said that he literally lived and worked solely for his children's prosperity. Yet he never guessed how Harry sometimes longed to throw his arms around his neck and pour out all his sorrows and perplexities, or how he hungered for a word of love. The usual morning and evening greetings might have passed between mere acquaintances, and in constant daily intercourse Harry never had fully realized the depth of his father's love, or Mr. Westbrooke his son's silent craving for sympathy and tenderness. The lad never knew how often, as on that night, his father bent over his sleeping face to murmur, "God bless my son!"



## CHAPTER XVII.

*BRIGHTER DAYS.*

HARRY's troubles, being unclouded by an uneasy conscience, did not prevent his sleeping soundly and peacefully, and he did not wake until his father's voice roused him, saying, "The dressing-bell is ringing, Harry."

He sprang up quickly then, anxious for a few moments of private conversation with his father before going to business. The opportunity came after breakfast, when Mr. Westbrooke returned to the room, saying, "Tell Poulson I will be over at nine o'clock, Harry. I want to examine some papers in the tin-box. Or, stay. You can help me if you will."

Very glad to postpone any of his time with Poulson when he could do so conscientiously, Harry took down the tin-box from its place on the closet-shelf, and drew up a chair to the table where his father was already seated.

"Father," he said, "can you spare me a few minutes before we open the box?"

"Certainly, my boy. And by the way, I think I can anticipate your request. My own experience



in yesterday's sun reminded me that our summer wardrobes must need replenishing. Order what you want, Harry, and send the bill to me. I can trust you not to be extravagant."

"Thank you," Harry said gratefully. "I do really need a suit. Mine are all too small for me. But I wanted to speak of other matters."

Mr. Westbrooke's face was gravely attentive, as Harry, at first with much hesitation, but afterwards fully and frankly, put before him all his difficulties and misgivings.

"You see, father," he said in conclusion, "I did not speak before because I hoped that if I gave my whole attention to the work before me, and faithfully tried to conquer all its difficulties, I should improve and be of some use to you."

"I see!"

"But I have tried faithfully and earnestly, and failed."

"Why do you think you have failed?"

"Why?" said Harry, in sincere amazement, "because Poulson finds me more incorrigibly stupid every day."

It was not often that Mr. Westbrooke was excited to merriment, his whole nature inclining to a grave reserve; but to Harry's utter bewilderment, he



answered his doleful confession by a burst of hearty laughter. "Cheer up, Harry, my son," he said presently, extending his hand across the table to place it kindly upon one of Harry's, "that is what we call 'Poulson's way.' He does not intend to deceive you, exactly, but having been educated in a hard school himself, he believes that praise and commendation are ruinous to young people. Often, when I have spoken to some of the lads encouragingly, he has checked me, shaking his head solemnly, and saying, 'It wont do, Mr. Westbrooke. I tell you, it wont do. Make a youngster conceited, and you spoil him. The only way to make a man of a boy is to keep him down.'"

"Then you think I am not so very dull after all?" said Harry, half doubtful still.

"I think if you could stand behind the door and hear old Poulson praise your work, you would be quite conceited enough to justify his opinion, and be spoiled."

The boy's face brightened at once.

"If the work taxes you too heavily," said Mr. Westbrooke kindly, "we must give you some spare hours. But," and his hand pressed Harry's, "you must not talk of leaving 'Westbrooke's,' my son. We cannot give you up!"



"I will never speak of it again, sir, if you really find me useful. Poulson need not have feared to spoil me, but I shall not take his incessant grumbling so much to heart after this."

"He means well, Harry, and he is very proud of you. More than once he has kept me for half an hour, showing me your beautiful figures, your neat pages, or some letter he considered especially adapted to the occasion calling for it. 'I never saw such a boy for hitting the nail right on the head,' he told me once; 'one might think he had been corresponding for the business for years.' No, no, do n't fret over the old man's fault-finding. It is only intended to spur you on to greater excellence."

"It was having an exactly contrary effect," said Harry, his face fairly radiant with pleasure; "a word of praise now and then would have done me a world of good, but the feeling that all my efforts only resulted in making failures was taking all the heart out of my work. If I really help you, either at the store or at home, I shall work on with a lighter heart."

"You really do, my son. And I am going to take you more fully into my confidence, with the old object in view, a partnership when you are of



age. Not the partnership I hoped for, Harry, in full prosperity, but a working place, to try to make the business once more what it has been."

As he spoke Mr. Westbrooke unlocked the box upon the table, and took out some papers. "By the way, Harry," he said, looking up, "is not your eighteenth birthday in this month?"

"On the twentieth, sir!"

"The twentieth of April, eh? That is next Tuesday."

"Yes, sir!"

"Next Tuesday. Let me see! I think I shall send you to Fairhaven to spend the day!"

"And see Aunt Ellen and Etta! Oh thank you!"

"You need some recreation, for you are altogether too pale! And I want to make some new arrangements about the countingroom. We will have no mystery about it, Harry. I put you under Poulson to learn the routine of bookkeeping and the other duties that will probably be required of you. But after your return from Fairhaven you will find a private desk for yourself in my own office. You will come to me only for orders. You write my letters for me, attend to my books, and only go to Poulson when you are bothered and need assistance. You have served your short, but hard-



working apprenticeship well, Harry ; now you shall have the place I hope you will keep for years—beside me I hope for a time ; after I am gone, in my own seat.”

“God helping me, you shall find me a faithful son and helper!” said Harry solemnly, deeply moved by the rush of happiness he felt.

“Spoken like a man!” said Mr. Westbrooke heartily. “And now you shall have a holiday. To-day I want your assistance, but to-morrow is Saturday. Get your new suit, and be all ready for an early start to Fairhaven on Monday morning. I will write to Ellen to expect you. You can leave on the morning train Wednesday, and so have your birthday entire, with your aunt and sister.”

“I wish you could come, sir.”

“Impossible, just now. But I will try to arrange matters so that you can take my place for a few days in the summer. Business will be dull then, and I will try to take a trip to see Ellen and Etta ! I am very glad you spoke to me this morning, Harry. It proves to me the expediency of hastening a little the plan I have always had, of taking you into my own office. With God’s help, my son, we will bring up the old house yet.”

With God’s help ! Harry’s heart bounded to



hear his father's words, for, even in the last few weeks, Mr. Westbrooke had seldom spoken of those religious emotions that were now influencing him. He had accepted his discipline with humility, and commenced retreading his wellworn path to wealth with prayerful effort, no longer relying, as of old, upon his own strength, but seeing his errors, and asking for guidance and help.

All the morning the two worked busily, Mr. Westbrooke, taught by Harry's frank words a little earlier in the day, giving him encouragement by letting him see where he was really assisting him, instead of putting aside his work for future use, without comment.

"There!" he said at last, closing the box, "we have half an hour before luncheon, and then I must go to the store. Can you write all those letters this afternoon?"

"I think I can, sir."

"That is all you need do until you return from Fairhaven. Take a good rest to-morrow. We shall soon see our way clear, Harry!"

"You think so?" the boy asked eagerly, very proud of that implied partnership in the little word "we."

"I do think so! Already I have wiped off



three of the heaviest liabilities, and the orders this spring come in briskly and steadily. It will be many years before we can hope for actual wealth, but I think it will not be very long that we need practise severe economy. You have helped me, Harry, more than with your time and pen. I think last winter, that I was on the road to utter desperation, madness, or suicide! I cannot describe to you how crushed I felt. I had resolved, to be sure, to face my troubles as boldly as I could, but they were grinding me into the very ground. Had you deserted me, Harry, had I not had my son's love to sustain me, I think I should have utterly despaired. Your faith led me once more into thoughts too long smothered under worldly pressure. I have fallen too much into the silent reception of your affection, my son, but I never failed to appreciate it. When I found my dressing-gown and slippers warmed for me on bitter winter evenings, if I merely said, 'Thank you,' I said it from my heart. When everything that I needed in the morning lay under my hand, I knew well whose thoughtful love had placed them there. When a strong young arm helped me over glassy pavements, I thanked God for my son!"

"Father, don't; I don't deserve it!" Harry cried.



"You do deserve it, and once at least you shall hear it. Never doubt my love, Harry. I am not demonstrative, as you know, but I bless God for my son every hour of my life."

Can it be wondered that Harry, after one long embrace given to his father, felt a new hope, a new strength to sustain him, no matter how hard the future might be. Never had he been so happy as he was on that day. His pen flew rapidly but with great painstaking over the letters left in his care, and when the last one was finished and ready for his father's revision, he dressed for a walk, as joyous as a boy released from school.

"A ready-made suit!" he thought, stopping at his father's tailor's, "and a cheap one as well. How I should have turned up my nose at that one year ago! But I am very glad 'we,' " and he smiled at the little word, "can afford even that now. Aunt Ellen wont know if it cost ten dollars or fifty, and will care less. And Etta—bless her blue eyes!—will think brother Harry is perfect, if he comes in homespun."

That day at Fairhaven was the brightest anticipation Harry had ever known. He gratefully accepted a small sum his father gave him to carry keepsakes to Etta, and spent Saturday in shopping



that would once have excited only contemptuous merriment, but now gave him keen pleasure. And in the evening the packing of a small valise was a far greater happiness than he had ever known when his ample wardrobe was carefully folded by a servant, to go into the great trunk suitable for a young gentleman of fashion sojourning for the summer at Newport, Saratoga, or Long Branch.

Sunday was a lovely day, without one shower to tell that it was April, and only fleecy clouds across the bright blue of the sunny skies. Father and son walked to church together, and spent the afternoon in quiet conversation until Mr. Westbrooke took a nap, waking refreshed, and inviting Harry to accompany him to evening service. For, long before, the Sunday work had been put aside, not, as at first, to save Harry from the effect of bad example, but because it was an offence against God. Saturday evening every paper relating to worldly affairs was locked in the table-drawer or in Mr. Westbrooke's secretary, to remain untouched until Monday morning; and as far as possible the old merchant withdrew his speech and thoughts from all business concerns upon the Sabbath-day. And while his conscience approved, he found too that his mind was clearer for that one day of perfect rest and tran-



quail attention to his devotions. In the evening he would often ask Harry to read aloud, inexpressibly comforted by the sound of the voice that spoke the holy words before him with such reverence and love.

Upon the Sunday evening before Harry's birthday, the hour between the return from church and bedtime was devoted to Etta. It would have taxed a less loving memory than Harry's very heavily to remember half the messages he was charged with for the golden-haired darling the father and brother both loved so devotedly, and even Harry laughed merrily as, bidding his father good-night, he added, "Etta will never let me come home without her, father, if she realizes how much you are longing to see her."

"She would have but a dull time here, Harry."

"Yes. She is certainly happier where she is, and she could not be in kinder care than Aunt Ellen's."

"But I hope the day will soon come when we can have them both with us, if not in the summer-time, at least during the winter months. It will hardly be safe, I imagine, to have Etta in the city during the hot weather for some years to come. Now, my boy, go to bed, to rest before your long



journey to-morrow. Good night. I shall read awhile."

Harry obeyed, and was soon fast asleep, dreaming of Etta in a field of buttercups, her curls wreathed with flowers, and crying out in great glee for brother Harry to look at her pretty posies.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

*A BIRTHDAY AT FAIRHAVEN.*

"You had better take the express-train at 10:30," Mr. Westbrooke said to his son, as he handed him a bank-note to cover his expenses. "Your aunt Ellen took the way-train to stop two hours at dinner, on account of Etta's weakness; but I think you had better keep right on. You will reach Fairhaven station then before five o'clock. I hope you will have a pleasant time, and I shall be glad to see you here again at dinner-time next Wednesday."

"Thank you, father," Harry said. "My only regret is that you are not coming with me. Good-by."

It was still too early to start for the dépôt, and Harry busied himself with a little plan he had. As soon as the chambermaid had put the room in order, Harry, who in the meantime had been to a florist's in the neighborhood, drew out a little stand from a corner, covered it with a white cloth, and put upon it a small glass containing a bunch of exquisite flowers. In front of this he placed a Bible,



purchased out of his scanty pocket-money, to replace the one that his father and himself had read together, now packed in his valise. He drew his father's favorite chair beside the table, threw over it his dressing-gown, put his slippers upon a footstool in front, and then writing upon a card, "A birthday greeting from a loving son," put that upon the table.

"There!" he said, standing back to see the effect, "that looks first rate; and father will know I thought of him up to the last moment."

Then taking up his valise, with a little grimace as he thought of the days when a softly-cushioned carriage, instead of a horse-car, took him to the dépôt, he went out, carefully locking the door, and putting the key in the place where his father would expect to find it.

It was rather a dull day, not raining, but very cloudy and chilly for so late in April. But Harry little heeded the weather as he walked down to the ferry, with the usual feeling of a traveller, that everything looks different as we start upon a journey.

The dépôt was reached in good season, a luncheon put up in the restaurant, two weekly newspapers purchased, and then Harry settled himself in



the car-seat, fully prepared to take all pleasure that should offer itself, and make the most of his brief and unexpected holiday.

“Three months sooner than I thought of seeing them,” he mused, as he imagined his aunt’s pleasure and Etta’s delight, “and all the dread of a hasty summons quite over. I wonder how much of farm-life one can see in a day. It must be jolly to *live* in the country, real country.”

For real country scenes and pursuits were totally out of the range of Harry’s experience. He had read of boy-life on a farm, and sighed a little sometimes as he envied the freedom from all the society restraints that cramped his own existence; but all he knew of farm-life was the glimpse to be seen from a carriage in an afternoon drive. Mrs. Westbrooke would have considered it an actual cruelty to be banished to such a summer residence, and certainly would never have gone from choice.

It rained heavily for an hour or two after the train left New York, and then the sun came out, showing all the beauty of the tender young foliage glittering with the crystal drops of water. Just at five o’clock the cars stopped at Fairhaven station, and the solitary passenger got out.

Upon the platform were two well-known figures,



two faces beaming with welcome, and Harry was folded in a most loving embrace by Aunt Ellen, while Etta stood looking shyly at the tall young fellow, who had grown in the last seven months almost out of her baby recollection. But presently Harry knelt upon one knee to bring his face on a level with that of his sister, and all Etta's shyness vanished as she ran into "brother Harry's" outstretched arms.

"You darling!" Harry cried, kissing her rosy cheeks and pouting lips; "you little beauty!"

"I can say brother Harry now," said Etta, with a most startling emphasis and display of her tongue upon the letters she had conquered.

"So you can. And are you glad to see brother Harry, Etta?"

"Ever so glad," was the quick reply; "and we've got a pound-cake for tea, all sugar on top, because it's your birthday!"

"O Etta! Etta!" cried Aunt Ellen merrily, "who was going to keep all the secrets?"

"I only told *one*. Never mind, brother Harry, there's some more I have n't told."

"We had better hurry home before you do, then," said Miss Westbrooke. "David has our own carryall here, Harry. I don't think the old farm-



horse would cut much of a figure in Central Park, but he can carry us over the three miles a little more quickly than our own feet. David," she added presently, as they stood at the foot of the platform steps, "this is my nephew, Harry Westbrooke."

"And proud I am to see you, sir," said David, somewhat awed at Harry's city-bred air and "store clothes." "You're welcome to Fairhaven, sir; and I remember your father when he left us, Mr. Harry, though I was n't much bigger than Miss Etta there the day he went away."

Harry replied kindly, and assisting Miss Westbrooke into the carryall, took the seat beside her, with Etta on his knee, while David chirruped to the old horse, and started him upon a steady jog-trot that was his most rapid travel.

"Isn't it lovely?" Harry cried, as they passed the meadows with the young grass like green velvet, orchards in full beauty of pink or white blossoms, banks of violets and blue starry forget-me-nots, and trees whose foliage was of the tender green of the young leaves.

"This is real country!"

"Yes!" Miss Westbrooke answered, "we were afraid the railroad was going to spoil Fairhaven; but you see, as soon as we are out of that small



cluster of houses and stores that make the village, we are as primitive as we were fifty years ago. Why, we have actually farmers' wives near my farm who have not seen the locomotive yet, although it has passed within three miles for nearly ten years."

"I guess you have n't many boys who can say that," said Harry laughing. "Etta!" in a mysterious whisper perfectly audible to all the others, "do you like candy?"

"Oh!" was the expressive reply, "I have n't had one bit for long, long, long time."

"Papa put a big box of candy for his little girl, right on the very top of my valise this morning."

"And is it there now?" asked Etta anxiously.

"I am quite sure that it is. I did n't take even one tiny taste."

"But I'll give you a whole lot, and auntie and David and Mary," said Etta quickly; "and, Auntie, do chickies like candy?"

"No, dear, chickies like corn better."

"The baby-chickies?" said Etta doubtfully.

"They like meal and water. They do n't care one bit for candy."

"We've got baby-chickies, brother Harry," said Etta, "all soft and yellow; but Etta do n't



touch them, 'cause mamma chicky do n't like it. The mamma chicky," said Etta very gravely, repeating what she had been told, "do n't understand that Etta wont hurt her babies, and so she's very 'fraid if she touches them."

"I see," said Harry, with due gravity. "And are they very pretty, Etta?"

"Boo-ti-ful!" was the slow, well-divided word in reply.

Pleasant chat made the drive seem very short, and Mary was standing at the door to give the party welcome, as they drove up. It was a new experience to Harry to see the servants upon such an equal social footing with their employer, but his quick tact prevented his showing any surprise, and he clasped Mary's outstretched hand in hearty reply to her words of greeting.

"I have the tea all ready, Miss Ellen," Mary said, opening the door of the sittingroom, where the table had been spread in honor of a visitor from "York," that far-away city the old servants thought of with great respect.

It was a company-tea, over which Miss Westbrooke, Mary and Etta had worked happily all the morning. Flaky biscuit, light as puff-balls, every one cut and pricked by Etta's chubby hands, as she



informed her brother, were balanced by thin crisp slices of dry toast. Marmalade in pretty glass dishes, rhubarb and young radishes, and fresh water-cresses, were like bouquets of color, while the iced cake took the place of honor in the centre of the table. A cutlet, brown and tempting, and thinly-sliced fried potatoes, with fragrant coffee, offered more substantial fare for a dinnerless traveller.

Harry's hand was on his chair, when Etta pulled him down, to say in a loud whisper, "You must n't sit down till auntie says a blessing." And he stood with bowed head to listen to the simple words of thanks and blessing.

Then, sitting down, he saw upon his plate a bookmark, worked in blue silk, with the name "Harry" in wonderful stitches, struggling often over their marked limits, some diagonal, some straight, some long, and some short, upon a piece of perforated card sewed to a blue ribbon.

"That's one surprise!" said Etta gleefully, "and you are to guess who made it, all by her own self, for you."

"I guess," said Harry slowly, "it must have been Aunt Ellen."

"No—oh—guess again," cried Etta, pursing up her mouth into a tiny rosy button.



"Mary?"

"No—no—*no*."

"It could n't be you!" cried Harry, in a voice of the greatest astonishment.

"But it was all my own self. A'n't it beautiful?"

"I think it is—just beautiful," said Harry, in all sincerity.

"There's only one little bit of bloody place, where I pricked my finger," said Etta, "and it was a'most done, and you were coming so soon I could not do another, so we thought you would n't mind."

"No, indeed! I'll put it in a book I open every day, Etta, so I can think of my little sister whenever I see it."

"Aunt Ellen's surprise is nicer than mine, 'cause she's bigger," said Etta, pushing a pair of handsomely-embroidered slippers nearer Harry's hand.

"These for me, too? Thank you, Auntie!" said Harry. "Did you work them?"

"Yes; they were intended for your summer visit, but were easily hurried a little. Now Etta dear, let brother Harry eat some supper. He must be hungry."

"'Ess!" said Etta, who, in moments of excite-



ment, was apt to fall back upon her baby words, "you can eat if you want to, brother Harry."

Harry availed himself of this gracious permission right heartily. Nothing had ever tasted so delicious to him as the tempting fare, eaten with such dearly-loved voices making music near him, such sweet faces to meet his eyes.

"One has to live in a boardinghouse awhile, to appreciate a home-meal like this," he said presently.

"Is boarding very disagreeable?" Miss Westbrooke asked.

"Very! It may be all my own fault, but there is absolutely nobody in the house who is in any way congenial to me. I don't mind it very much now, because I am busy most of the time. But it was very doleful before," and here Harry laughingly straightened himself and looked important, "I went into business."

Miss Westbrooke smiled too, but her lip quivered as if the tears were very near the smile. She had grieved over her brother's misfortunes very deeply, appreciating fully how heavy they were at his advanced age, and after so prosperous a business career.

But she would not cloud one moment of Har-



ry's short holiday, and soon was chatting pleasantly, telling of Etta's improved health and the many delights the opening of spring had brought to her.

"Every day brings some new discovery," she said. "We know where many of the birds are building, and where the violets are the bluest and thickest. And we watch for the broods of chickens, that Etta thinks are even prettier than the birds. Even my pet canary is not so beautiful to Etta as the little downy yellow balls that follow the old hens."

"'Cause a canary is in a cage," explained Etta, "and chickies run all about."

After tea the three walked in the garden, exchanging bits of experience since their last parting, and Etta's heart was delighted with the box of candy and a puzzle-picture in Harry's valise, while simple gifts from brother and nephew proved to Miss Westbrooke that she also was kindly remembered.

In the morning, Etta's little fist thumping at Harry's door was answered instantly by his appearance, fully dressed and ready for all the sights she was ready to show him.

"Auntie says we may go for an hour 'fore breakfast," she said, "if we do n't get losed."



"Be very careful, then, that you do n't lose me," said Harry gravely, "because I should n't know my way here without you."

"I'll be careful," was the equally grave assurance, and Harry was led down stairs, through the kitchen, where he exchanged morning greetings with the old servants, and out into the cool, fresh, morning air, with the early sunshine making every object bright and beautiful. Here he made the acquaintance of the chickens, old hens and wee chicks, the ducks and ducklings, the geese and goslings, very ready to agree with Etta that the chicks were prettiest of all the babies. The barn was visited, Etta losing all her fear of the cattle when held in Harry's arms, and pointing out the cows as she called each one by name, before David appeared to drive them into the barnyard to be milked. Then the child scampered to the house for her own cup and one for her brother, and Harry tasted new milk for the first time in his life, and—did n't like it.

"It must be an acquired taste, like that for tomatoes and olives," he said merrily to his aunt at breakfast; "it is too warm and rich for me."

"It suits Etta," said Miss Westbrooke. "Dr. Lewis told me to let her drink all she wanted, just



at milking-time, and no medicine was ever more efficacious. She is very fond of it."

"That and her life here have certainly made a new child of her," said Harry. "It seems almost impossible that she can be the thin, pale, little snowdrop you brought from New York last fall."

"She was awfully peaked, that's a fact," said Mary, "but Miss Ellen is a master hand at nursing, Mr. Harry. Nobody can get sick within three miles of 'Westbrooke Farm' without sending over to Miss Ellen. Many a night she's gone two miles in the snow to some poor body that was alone and suffering."

"There was not much nursing required in Etta's case," said Miss Westbrooke, "only to guard against her catching cold."

"Did have one cough," said Etta, puckering up her face, "and took nice medicine, all sweet."

"We do not send for doctors for trifling ailments," said Miss Ellen. "Etta's cough was not very severe."

"A'n't it most time for that other surprise?" asked Etta, when breakfast was over, pulling her aunt down to whisper in her ear.

"Most time, Etta," was the reply. "You can



get your little basket for Mary, and tell brother Harry how we mean to spend his birthday."

Etta ran up stairs, and soon returned with a small, covered basket, which she carried into the kitchen, where Mary was already busily filling a larger one with sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, pies, cakes, and buttered biscuit.



## CHAPTER XIX.

*THE PICNIC.*

"WE'RE going to have a picnic!" announced Etta, returning from the kitchen to the sitting-room in great excitement. "A real basket picnic!"

"You don't mean it!" Harry cried.

"'Ess! Down to Silver Brook. Only in the book there was folks, and we wont have any folks."

"I think I must explain," said Miss Westbrooke. "In one of Etta's storybooks there is a long description of a picnic, that captivated her fancy at once. She was quite willing to postpone the pleasure of a day out doors, and dinner carried in a basket, until warm weather; but just as soon as the letter announcing your coming was read to her, she petitioned for a picnic for your birthday party."

"Splendid!" said Harry, answering the eager question in Etta's blue eyes.

"But," continued Miss Westbrooke, "I thought you would rather postpone introductions to our friends here until the long summer visit I hope you



will make here; and so our picnic-party will be very select, consisting only of Mr. Westbrooke, Miss Westbrooke, and Miss Etta Westbrooke. You will condescend to drive Jerry, I hope, for one day."

"I only wish I could drive him every day for six weeks," was the quick reply. "Where is our picnic ground?"

"About two miles from here, one of Etta's favorite spots when she and I take our afternoon drive. Did your father ever tell you of Silver Brook?"

"Often. But I thought it was on the farm."

"It does run through one of my meadows, but winds away for a long distance beyond. The bend where we are going to-day is near a grove of trees, where there is a great flat rock, about three feet high. I think it is that natural table that makes the spot a favorite picnic ground for Fairhaven folks, and they have made rustic seats of rock and fallen trees around the table and in the grove. I sent David over on Saturday to put up a swing for Etta, and intend to leave it there for our future visits and the benefit of Fairhaven children generally."

"Oh! oh!" cried Etta, dancing about on one



foot, "that's my surprise. Jerry is at the door, Aunt Ellen, and David is putting the baskets in the carryall."

The little party was soon ready, Miss Ellen bidding Mary have a substantial tea-dinner ready for their return at five o'clock; and taking the reins, Harry drove Jerry along the road Miss Westbrooke pointed out. The day was cloudless and warm, a perfect spring day, promising early summer, and there was no disposition on the part of any of the three to hurry Jerry's steady, slow trot, as he carried them down shady lanes and across roads where the dust was well laid by the rain of the previous day.

"I never realized until to-day," said Harry, "how much you sacrificed for us last summer, Aunt Ellen. It must have been very hard to leave all this for city life."

"I love the country very much," was her reply, "but I love my brother and his children far more even than my home. It seems very pleasant to you here, Harry, but I am afraid that you would soon miss city excitement and bustle. I have passed my whole life here, so that the quiet and monotony never weary me."

"It seems as if I should never tire of it," Harry











answered. "It must be easy to be good here. One could never forget the Creator in the midst of his bounties here."

"His bounties are as manifest everywhere," was the reply, "if we will only see them."

"True, but here the hand of man has not covered up the face of nature."

They had left the carryall when Harry spoke, and having made Jerry comfortable for the day, were standing near the little brook, that, just at this point, rushed over the rocks with the pleasant music of a waterfall.

There was a moment of silence, and then Etta, in a sweet, childish treble, began to sing a hymn her aunt Ellen had taught her in the home Sunday-school she had established for stormy days, when they could not go to the village to church.

She stood upon a flat rock, her hands clasped behind her, holding her broad straw hat, her sweet face earnest in its expression of childlike devotion, and Harry felt his own heart, too, lifted to the Creator of all, in the presence of his bounteous gifts to his children manifest upon every side.

As Etta finished her song, her brother lifted her in his arms for a loving caress, saying, "Thank you very much, little sister. Your voice is as sweet as



those of the little birds up in the trees over our heads. Brother Harry does not have any one at home now to sing him songs."

"But Etta will when she comes. Etta will learn lots and lots of hymns to sing to you and papa."

"I will tell papa so," said Harry, "and you must remember just this very one for him."

"I will."

"And now, Etta," said Miss Ellen, "you may run where you want to, if you will keep in sight and not go too near the water. You will find plenty of daisies and other flowers just beyond that great tree, and we can carry home a large bouquet in the basket."

Then the child, prouder of her brother's kiss and words of praise for her little song than a jewelled concert-singer of rapturous applause, ran away to seek wild-flowers, and the older folks found comfortable seats under the trees, where, still watching the child, they could have a long chat.

"It may be our only uninterrupted opportunity to talk," Miss Westbrooke said, "and I want to question you, Harry, upon a very delicate subject."

Harry was all attention in a moment.

"You may not know, Harry, that my father's



death left my mother and me very poor. We could not make the farm produce what father had been getting from it, because mother was in very bad health, and a great deal of my time had to be given to nursing her. Your father was very generous, sending us frequent and liberal gifts of money; but he was not a rich man at that time, and needed his capital to carry on his business. But after mother died, being then in prosperous circumstances, he settled upon me the sum of ten thousand dollars, entirely out of his own future control. The interest alone of that sum has been more than I needed, for my farm supplies me with most of my living, and I send a great deal to market. I used some of the spare money to improve the house and out-buildings, to put up good fences, and to keep the place in thoroughly good repair. But I have saved nearly two thousand dollars, now in bank, for emergencies. Harry, your father's business trouble seemed to me the fitting opportunity to return his gift and what I had saved. I can live comfortably upon the profits of the farm. But your father refuses to accept my offer."

"He was most grateful to you for making it, Auntie. He read me your letter with tears in his eyes."



"Harry, you must help me in this, and add your persuasion to mine, to make him take the money. He needs it more now than I do."

"I think not, Auntie. If he were in absolute poverty or danger of disgrace, it would be different. But he is not. His creditors understand fully the disastrous speculations that crippled him, and they are willing to give him time to meet his obligations. To take your small fortune would only be to divide it among those who do not actually need it, and to each of whom his own portion of it would seem very trifling. We," and again that merry smile lit the boy's face that always came when he spoke of his own share in his father's interests, "we'll pull through, Auntie, with God's help, and pay everybody."

"You would not deceive me, Harry?"

"I would not, indeed, in the smallest particular. Father's good name is untouched, because he gave up everything, and made no concealments of the cause of his troubles. He will soon be clear again. Why, Auntie, he expects to stand clear by the time I am of age, and to take me into partnership, with the business almost as profitable as ever, though his wealth will not be so large as it has been."



"You have taken a great load off my mind, Harry. All your letters have been cheerful, though I could see you were far from happy; but your father was never a good correspondent, and now his letters are shorter and less frequent than ever."

"He is always at work, Auntie. I don't think that the laborer who leaves his pick and shovel at six o'clock and envies the rich man driving home in a carriage, realizes how much harder that very rich man may work, though it may not be labor that soils his hands."

"And you, Harry? You are very much paler and thinner than you were in the fall."

Then Harry under kind questioning told his aunt all the trials of his winter's discipline with its heartaches and humiliations, and of his father's kind and loving plans for the future. And just such sympathy as he had hungered for, for months, he met as he spoke. It was like a new lease of life to him to listen to the gentle words of encouragement and advice, drawn from higher founts of wisdom than Aunt Ellen's and satisfying every craving of Harry's heart.

The conversation was a very long one, and little Etta, coming often with bunches of grass and flowers, and seeing only grave faces, at last, nestling



close to Harry's side, said very pitifully, "I thought this was a picnic, with baskets and swinging and lots o' fun ; and it a' n't anything but just talk!"

"That is altogether too bad!" said Harry cheerfully. "Auntie, shall we see what is in the baskets?"

Miss Westbrooke assenting, Etta volunteered the information that the tablecloth, knives, forks, and plates, were in the basket with red stripes, and the "goodies" in the other one, while her own basket was full of cookies. She was very happy helping to spread the feast, and brought all her flowers to look pretty in the middle of the rock table.

Mary's bountiful supply of provisions had ample justice done to it, the older folks putting aside grave conversation to devote themselves to Etta, and listen to all the wonderful discoveries she had made in her morning's ramble around them, and which she was eager to point out to Harry, from the big "happy toad, close by the brook," to the "birdie's nest with the birdie sitting on it," upon a bush so low that the little maiden could see into it by standing upon a big stone.

The table cleared, Etta was delighted by being allowed to control all the afternoon occupations, graciously permitting Aunt Ellen to take occasional



rests, and Harry to feed Jerry. "Because," he gravely informed her, "Jerry could never carry them home again, if he was starved to death."

"I'm glad I don't have to eat oats and corn," said Etta, peeping into Jerry's nose-bag. "I like pies and cakes better."

"How about oatmeal porridge and Johnny-cake?" asked Miss Westbrooke. "I think I've seen a little girl I know, eating her share of oats and corn."

"O Auntie! Are they made of oats and corn?"

"They are!"

"Well, then," said Etta, after a moment of consideration, "I'm glad I don't have to eat them raw, as Jerry does! Now, brother Harry, will you swing me?"

That was great fun, the strong young arms tossing the fearless, laughing child high up among the branches of the trees, while Aunt Ellen, half fearful, stood watching, lest there should be a fall. But no mishaps broke the pleasure of the birthday and Etta's surprise. The hours passed only too quickly until it was time to harness Jerry again, and turn their faces homeward.

"It is certainly ridiculous to feel hungry, after the tremendous luncheon I ate," said Harry, as the three entered the sittingroom again, "but I feel as



if that supper I see Mary bringing in would just suit my present appetite! You would find me an expensive boarder, Auntie, in this splendid air. I haven't eaten so much in one day for six months, and I don't know that anything I ever ate tasted so good as the food does here."

"I'm so hungry too," chimed in Etta, "and there wasn't one cookie in my basket when I feeled for one in the carryall."

"Well," Mary said, putting down a most appetizing dish of ham and eggs, "tea is ready now, whenever you are."

Long after Etta, and even David and Mary were fast asleep, on that pleasant April evening, Miss Westbrooke and Harry sat in the sittingroom, talking earnestly, both reluctant to shorten the precious time that they could be together.

Already Mr. Westbrooke's letters, brief though they were, had shown his sister that his heart had been opened through his misfortunes to higher influences and motives than had moved him in past years, and while careful to refrain from any word to jar upon Harry's filial respect, she drew from him much comforting assurance of her brother's newly roused reverence for holy things, his attendance at church, and his entire renunciation of



Sunday labor. She could not but hope that these outward changes sprang from a vital change within: that her brother was a sincere penitent, and had found in Christ that peace the world could not give him. And Harry, who had kept all his spiritual longings shut in his own heart, drew strength and comfort for many future hours of self-communion from his aunt's words.

The one grief, upon which they could scarcely forbear to touch, was the separation that seemed inevitable for many years to come. Etta would need womanly care for several years longer, and the Westbrookes, father and son, would not soon be in a position to make a home for Miss Ellen and Etta, even if it was advisable to bring either to the city to live. Letters had been, and would be frequent and confidential, but letters will not fill the longing for face to face conversation, the hunger to hear loved voices.

Still it was some comfort to look forward to the summer visits, and perhaps to a visit from Aunt Ellen in the fall or spring, when she could be received in some pleasant boardinghouse. "For," Harry said, "we are looking out now for a place where we need not be at much more expense, but will have better food and a pleasanter room. I



think we scarcely appreciated what a very poor cook we have, for we were in that state when it was rather a relief to feel victimized in every way. But we are going to look more at the sunny side of life after this. I am so glad that you approve of my plan for coaxing father to go out with me, and do not think it will be officious for me to try to get him to leave his business sometimes for a day of recreation."

"I think it will do him a world of good, Harry," was the reply. "He needs some one to suggest to him that his treadmill existence is really not a necessity. Let him see that you do not wish him to pile up wealth for you and Etta, at the expense of his own health, and he will perhaps be persuaded to keep up his business upon a more limited scale and with less anxiety and toil."

Next morning the carryall took all the Westbrookes to the station, where, with cheerful faces, but suspiciously dim eyes, Miss Ellen and Harry bade each other farewell, while Etta made no secret of her tearful lamentations over "brother Harry's" departure, but held up a tear-stained face for a good-by kiss, with a message for her dear papa.



## CHAPTER XX.

*THE RETURN TO BROOKLYN.*

MISS WESTBROOKE herself had packed Harry's valise, and he did not open it until he was once more in his own room, waiting for his father's return to dinner. It had made his eyes dim, while his lips smiled, to see the little stand he had arranged still apparently untouched, the flowers hanging their heads forlorn and withered, while the Bible was evidently carefully replaced after use just where he had left it.

A book-mark similar to his own, with "Papa" in the same straggling stitches embroidered upon it by Etta's fingers, was in a folded paper in his vest pocket, and this Harry placed between the leaves of the Bible, sure that his father would be best pleased to use it there. Then he opened his valise for the slippers Miss Westbrooke had embroidered for her brother, and upon the very top lay a white envelope directed to him in his aunt Ellen's familiar handwriting.

Opening this quickly, a hundred-dollar note fluttered to the floor, and a few kind words from



Miss Westbrooke begged his acceptance of this for a birthday gift, to be kept for his own private use. There was time before dinner to write a few words of cordial thanks, and put the letter in the corner mail-box; and soon after his return Harry heard his father's step coming up the stairs.

He looked tired as he entered the room, but his face brightened instantly as he grasped Harry's hand and looked into his happy eyes.

"Fairhaven must suit Westbrooke blood," he said cheerily; "you look better than you have looked for weeks. Did you enjoy your visit, my son?"

"Every moment of it; but I am glad to get back too, and quite ready to buckle down to work again. But you must admire some specimens of needlework I have brought with me."

Etta's efforts in that line having been duly admired, with most loving touches and tender eyes, the slippers were put aside to be made up, and father and son settled down for a good chat, just as the dinner-bell rang.

"No work to-night," Mr. Westbrooke said, as they reëntered the room after dinner; "I must hear all about our baby and your aunt Ellen."

Harry gladly gave a most minute description of every detail he could recall of the happy, quiet home



he had just left so regretfully. Above all, he dwelt upon the improvement in Etta, though he laughed as he said, "You would not know the prim little lady that you remember languidly walking beside Jeannette in the latest Paris fashion for little girls. Etta wears good heavy-soled boots and calico dresses, with a sunbonnet over all her curls, and she runs and jumps like a squirrel, laughs gayly, and her voice is as strong and clear as a child's voice ought to be. She is plump and rosy, and full of play. I never saw any one so changed. And Aunt Ellen looks stronger and brighter in her own home than she did here. I hope you will go up there soon and see them. They are very anxious to have you do so."

"I will try during the summer, and we must manage a longer vacation for you. Did you see any of the cousins? I believe there are some still living at Fairhaven."

"I saw no one but the inmates of the house. Etta was disposed to think our picnic was not quite in order without 'folks;' but Aunt Ellen thought, very truly, that, as my visit was so short, I would rather be with her and Etta only."

Then Harry repeated most of his conversation with his aunt regarding her resources, and received



his father's warm assurance that he had spoken exactly as he would have dictated in the matter. "Business is very good, Harry," he said. "We have only to attend to it, to prosper. You will have your father's disastrous experience to teach you one good lesson, my son. Keep clear of tempting speculations, and trust the slow penny rather than the quick dollar. While I held fast to my business, carefully watching its favorable opportunities, risking only what was necessary, owing no man, I prospered. When I took up schemes that promised speedy returns of enormous profit upon the sums invested, I was led on and on, till I lost the hard-earned wealth of fifty years' toil in a few short months. Remember the warning, Harry."

"I will, sir."

"And remember also that I was not a faithful steward. I counted my wealth as my own, as gained by my own exertions, and not as a gift from God, for the use of which he would hold me to account. I used it for my own purposes, not his."

"You were always generous, father."

"To my own wife and children. But if I gave largely to charity, it was not in Christ's name, not for his sake, but simply to maintain a good reputation and make an ostentatious display of my riches.



Just so far as you have means, Harry, remember that 'God loveth a cheerful giver,' and use your wealth in his name for the best charities, not for loudly-praised public shows of generosity. I am an old man, my son. I cannot hope to see you enjoy the prosperity for which we are laying the foundation, but you will not forget such counsel as our Heavenly Father spares me to give you."

Harry could only reply by a mute pressure of the hand his father was holding, fearing to trust his voice to speak.

Presently Mr. Westbrooke began to explain what would be the new duties of the young clerk and future partner, under his own orders and supervision.

"I wish you to become thoroughly acquainted with every detail of my own work, Harry," he said, "to go out with me when I am on business errands, to understand as fully as I do myself all the transactions of the house, to know the duties of every employé; in short, to fit yourself to eventually step into my place when—" and meeting his son's troubled eyes, the old merchant changed the words upon his lips, and added, "when I go to Fairhaven to be nursed by Ellen and Etta through a tranquil old age of quiet happiness."



"I think," said Harry, smiling, "that I shall never devote myself as persistently as you have done to business, under those circumstances. The attractions to tempt me to frequent vacations spent at Fairhaven will be too strong to be always resisted."

"I would not have you the drudge that I have been," was the reply. "I can say truly that I never enjoyed my riches excepting in the knowledge that your mother had every luxury for herself and her children. I had become so accustomed to giving, not only all my time, but all my thoughts to money-making, that even in the gayest company my mind was over my ledger, and I soon gave up society. I entered far too late in life to find pleasure there. You must not make that mistake, my son. Make friends and keep them, not among the fashionable sons of rich men, but with those of worth and integrity. Let society with you represent something better than gay dresses and dancing."

"Wiley tells me they are very desirous of my again joining the Debating Club, father. But it will take me away every Thursday evening. There are some fine scholars there, and I feel quite complimented at their assurance that they miss me."

"You had better go, my boy. It will be an



agreeable change from your work. And, by the way, we are to go back to Mrs. Dalton's on Monday."

"Mrs. Dalton's! Can—"

"Can we afford it? Not exactly as we were placed before, but she offers me a second story back room, large and well-furnished, with a bedroom adjoining, for little more than it costs us here, if we count car-fares and ferriage. You see I am learning to take the pennies into my calculations. We shall meet only refined people at her table, and need not make friends with any we do not like. I am convinced that the discomforts and wretched cooking we get here are injuring your health and mine, and we had better save in some other way than in our board."

"I am very glad we are going back," said Harry.

"You have borne your share of the disagreeable part of our lives bravely, Harry, but I hope the last winter has ended the worst of our troubles. I begin to see my way clear once more."

Mr. Westbrooke then explained to Harry, more minutely than he had done before, the causes of his difficulties, the entanglements so occasioned, and his reasons for thinking brighter prospects were before them. He roused all the boy's manli-



ness by this confidence, and could scarcely have found a surer method of engaging the whole interest of his future young partner. The prospect of wealth, of business importance, was entirely secondary in Harry's heart to the prospect of being truly his father's *partner*, a full sharer in his work and plans, helping him in every possible way, and bringing his youthful strength, hope, and energy, to carry out schemes suggested by Mr. Westbrooke's long experience. He entered warmly into all that was placed before him for his work for the next few days, proving by his intelligent questions and remarks that he would be a true help and partner when the proper time came.

The mantel-clock chiming twelve found the two still talking, but roused Mr. Westbrooke to the recollection of Harry's long journey, and his desire to enter at once upon his new duties in the morning.

"You must not sit up any longer," he said, "but I should like to have you read your chapter in the Bible aloud before you retire. And to-morrow I will introduce you to the corner of my office I have fitted up with a new desk and chair for you."

"I am very impatient to see them and to begin my work there," said Harry. "Where shall I read father?"



"Read the sixth chapter of St. John, Harry. It was my father's favorite chapter, the one he read most frequently at family worship. Does Ellen keep up the old custom still?"

"Yes, sir. She reads a chapter to the family every morning before breakfast, and they all kneel in prayer, closing always with the Lord's Prayer. Even Etta says it in her sweet, baby voice."

"Shall we commence our day so after this, Harry, instead of reading and praying alone? Not that I would deprive you of your private devotions, but would like to unite with you once a day in reading and prayer."

So gladly, so gratefully did Harry acquiesce in this desire, that Mr. Westbrooke understood at last how the boy had craved such companionship.

Very reverently, after this, the chapter was read, Harry's voice faltering more than once, although he kept on steady to the end. And the verse he held fast in his memory, to think over while he waited for sleep to close his senses, was, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you."



## CHAPTER XXI.

*LEFT IN CHARGE.*

HARRY had expected—he could scarcely have told for what reason—that Mr. Poulson would resent his removal from his supervision, and his being placed, in a certain sense, above him in the countingroom. Heretofore there had never been a clerk admitted to a share in the private office where Mr. Westbrooke's own desk stood, although Mr. Poulson's position as confidential clerk brought him there for hours at a time very frequently. But he also had an office to himself, separated by a partition from the long countingroom where the other clerks worked in company. Only those who were intrusted for a time to the old man's care and tuition, as Harry had been, ever shared Mr. Poulson's desk.

It was rather nervously, therefore, that Harry, lingering a moment after his father passed into his own office, said "Good-morning" to his stern taskmaster.

To his surprise the old clerk, with a merry twinkle in his eye, stretched out his hand, saying,



"Let me be the first to congratulate you upon your promotion, Mr. Harry. You thought me an old tyrant, did you?"

Seeing his father had betrayed him, Harry said frankly, "I thought I was a most unpromising specimen of a clerk."

"Not a bit of it, my boy, not a bit of it. You're a perfect chip of the old block, and have as clear a head as I ever saw on young shoulders. I'm very glad you are coming to take some of the care from your father, and I shall be proud to take your orders, sir, when our sign reads: 'Westbrooke & Son.'"

"Thank you," Harry said, much gratified. "I shall not be afraid of a scolding now, if I find I must ask you to help me sometimes."

"I don't know about that," was the dry reply. "If I think you want a scolding, I shall consider it my duty to give it to you."

Harry laughed at this threat, and went to his father's office. The new desk was very attractive, placed under a window newly curtained, and with a soft white mat under it, and a new waste-paper basket beside the large, cushioned chair. All the appointments—inkstand, gold pen, pen-wiper, letter-book, and other stationery—were shining in new



brightness, and very happily the young clerk took possession. He was fully aware that he was not to occupy the position that had once filled his imagination, that of an ornamental partner, sharing the profits of the firm without any of the labor, but must seriously give all his business hours to steady work, studying his routine of duty as faithfully as he had ever studied his most attractive school tasks.

With the earnest hope that his father might live for many years still, he had realized very fully in the past few months that Mr. Westbrooke's age required him to take many more hours of relaxation than he had ever been in the habit of taking, while, at the same time, such rest would be of little benefit to him unless he could feel that he left his business in intelligent care. With this motive ever before him, Harry was strictly attentive to every explanation given to him, conscientiously careful in the performance of every duty intrusted to him. Errors he sometimes made, even serious ones; but they were the errors of inexperience, not of negligence, and each one was a lesson impressed upon his mind with the sharpness of regret or self-reproach.

Old merchants, who had known Mr. West-



brooke for years, began to compliment him upon his renewed youth, as his face brightened and his form was carried more erectly, with some of the burden of care so gently lifted from his mind. And Harry found himself in a new circle of friends as these same merchants, urging his father to more social intercourse, invited his son to join their parties. Other men but little older than Harry, who had before been disposed to look with half-envious contempt upon him as a useless young member of fashionable society, sought his friendship, and gave him many useful hints from their own somewhat longer business experience. And wiseacres shook their heads solemnly and wondered if Mr. Westbrooke really intended to again risk the business that was reviving so rapidly, by giving that youngster a full partnership in the concern. Some of Harry's old follies and extravagances bore most heavily upon such discussions, but as a rule he was winning more approbation than blame.

"A dignified little chap," one grayheaded merchant of wealth and experience, who had watched Harry with great interest, said, half-smiling. "I called in to see Westbrooke yesterday about some supplies for the fall, and the youngster, while he was perfectly respectful, plainly showed that he was



master in the office during his father's absence. I did not hesitate, after five minutes' conversation, to transact the entire business with him, and am fully satisfied that it will meet with proper attention."

"H'm!" was the comment of the gentleman addressed; "I don't approve of giving too much authority to boys, especially boys who have been brought up to consider fast horses and champagne suppers necessities of life. I've heard some pretty rough stories about this same young Westbrooke, spending half the night gambling and making money fly like chaff."

"Yes, yes. I've heard them too; but the boy was brought up to believe his father's wealth almost unlimited, and could scarcely be expected to deny himself the pleasures and temptations of other lads of his class. I am glad he has dropped young Meredith."

"Or young Meredith has dropped him," was the dry reply.

"Either way it is for Westbrooke's advantage to see no more of him. He sails for Europe next week. Was to have gone in March, but waited for a party. He goes under the care of a private tutor whose reputation is none of the best. I don't know what Raymond is thinking about to allow it."



“Raymond’s own sons are fair proofs of the attention he pays to youthful morals. It is lamentable to see men not more than twenty-two or three so thoroughly at home in expensive dissipation of every kind as they are. The city is a bad school for youngsters with rich fathers, a very bad school.”

“You are right. And that is what amazes me about Harry Westbrooke. His father has never been so poor that the lad could not have kept up his old pursuits and connections, and yet he has dropped them all. There was something more than his father’s failure to spur him on.”

Something more! There was indeed, although the old merchant did not know that strong motive power sustaining and encouraging the young heart. The power of faith had delivered Harry from the bondage of the old life, and nursed by constant, humble prayer, and sincere seeking for guidance, had been his shield and buckler through the many temptations in his new life.

After his introduction to the office, and his entrance upon that confidential intercourse that was to pave the way to the future partnership, there was never again the wall of reserve between father and son that had existed for so many years; and while Harry was stronger and happier for his father’s



confidence and sympathy, he little appreciated what deep happiness the father himself found in this companionship with a young heart, loving and tender and respectful.

They were like boys together in the half-holidays they secured for relaxation, going to the seaside to spend the hours of a summer day when the heat was intense and business dull. They threw all care aside for the time, enjoying the trip, the fresh, bracing air, the surf-bathing, even the outdoor shows, the luncheon, and returned tired and yet refreshed to their rooms, to talk and laugh over their day's experiences and adventures.

They were like old men in their counting-room, gravely discussing the day's affairs, the state of the market, the accounts and investments, the expediency of this or that transaction, the various emergencies constantly arising. And after the office was closed and the business of the day over, they would often spend long evenings over correspondence or accounts.

In society, where they were seldom seen apart, they were still in perfect sympathy. And Mr. Westbrooke, led by Harry's fresh, young taste, found delight in much modern literature that was entirely new to him, consenting readily and often to



put aside business cares for an evening, and settle back comfortably in an easy-cushioned chair, to listen to Harry as he read aloud, or discussed with him the merits of the authors under consideration. It was such companionship as is often seen between mothers and grown-up daughters, but seldom between a father and son, and such as would have been scarcely possible but for the peculiar isolation of both lives from family ties.

It was not entirely without hesitation, fully as he trusted Harry, that Mr. Westbrooke early in August consented to go to Fairhaven to spend a fortnight. Harry was to have full charge of the business, with Mr. Poulson at hand to advise him upon any matter that had not yet come within the range of his own experience; and while he was neither nervous nor over-anxious, he was deeply conscious of the trust reposed in him, the responsibility resting upon his young shoulders.

But there was no shadow of care upon his bright young face as he bustled about the room, with the early August morning sunshine streaming in at the windows, while he packed his father's valise, shook out his duster, brushed his hat, and put his cane in reach.

"Here are your new slippers," he said, "fortu-



nately broken in to perfect comfort. We must put those in, that Aunt Ellen may see we appreciate her gifts; and your linen is all in splendid order. Nobody would believe how I have had to manage with the washerwoman. She does n't dare put any more bone buttons as big as a silver quarter of a dollar upon our wristbands. Your cuffs and collars are all in this paper box, so that they wont be crushed. And your best suit is folded as if I had been apprenticed to a tailor—oh, you need n't laugh at me till you can find one crease in it—and you will need a microscope for that. I left Etta's bookmark in your Bible. And the presents are all in this box; it just fits in here as if the space was made for it. I ordered a carriage last night."

"You extravagant young monkey!"

"Well, you see, a journey is quite an event in your life, and I propose to start you off in style, Pullman car and every luxury attainable. I hope you appreciate the fact that your duster is a new one, and your hatbox in the latest fashion."

"I begin to think you are glad to be rid of me," said Mr. Westbrooke, half sadly.

"So I am, sir, for two weeks. After that, if you remain, you may expect to see another valise in the hand of your dutiful son, at Fairhaven."



"We wont send you back again ; but Poulson will be reduced to a pitiable state at such an overthrow of all precedent. I think he has expected to see the walls fall in whenever we went off together for a day. But for both to go for a longer time would quite overcome the old man. Here comes the carriage. Are you going to the dépôt?"

"Most assuredly. I should quite expect you to change your mind at the last moment, and walk into the office, valise, duster, and all, if I do not see you fairly started."

But no such suggestion was carried out, Mr. Westbrooke starting full of almost boyish enthusiasm to visit his old home, his sister, and the wee darling he missed more than any one guessed. For two days all went on well in the office, and then, entering there one morning, Harry was followed by Mr. Poulson. Upon the old clerk's face was a deep, sorrowful cloud, and his voice was very low as he said, "We've traced up that forged check, Mr. Harry."

In a moment Harry's face also was shadowed. "Well?" he said quietly.

"Just as we feared, sir."

"Wright?"

"Yes. Clear as daylight. I was quite sure he



was going wrong. It stands to reason a man in his position, with his salary, cannot keep up with the company he associates with unless he has some private means."

"What have you done?"

"Nothing as yet. I thought you might wish to send for Mr. Westbrooke."

"Mr. Westbrooke, anticipating this very matter, has left it entirely to me. Tell me what you have learned."

"I had him watched, as you directed, and the notes have been traced to him directly. The numbers correspond with the bank-list. Probably he paid some large sum before we discovered the forgery. I waited for you to come down before ordering his arrest."

"Right. Send him here."

"To you alone?"

"Certainly."

"But—pardon me, Mr. Harry. He is a man, you know, older than you are by some six or seven years at least, and—we know he is a criminal—is it quite safe?"

"I think so. You are within call, you know."

Something in the young face, very pale and very sad, drove back any further remonstrance upon



the old clerk's lips, and he left the office, while Harry, covering his eyes for a moment, prayed silently that he might meet the trying interview as a Christian man, not governed by any personal resentment or severity.

The young man, who presently entered, evidently expected the words of condemnation that he deserved, for his face was deadly pale, although there was a bravado in his air ill concealing his nervous terror. "You sent for me," he said, with an insolence that proved he expected to exert all the influence of his superior age against his young employer.

"I sent for you, Wright, to tell you that your services would be needed here no longer, and that, in justice to others, we must decline giving you any recommendation."

"Is that all?" with a deep breath of relief.

"All ; unless," and Harry's face was almost womanly in its pleading expression, "you have anything to say to me."

"I—I don't understand you," stammered the young man, feeling all desire to be insolent fast deserting him.

"I think you do," was the quiet reply. "I think you understand that we have made discover-



ies that force us to take a painful step, that in strict justice would compel us to put the future control of your affairs into the hands of the law. It may be that I make a mistake now, for I am young, and my father is not here to advise me. But not very long ago I struggled with the same temptations that are besetting you. I too learned the fascinations of gambling. I too tried to keep up with the extravagances of men of wealth. My temptation was not so great as yours, for I had control of the money to support my expenses. But, had I been in your position, I might have been led to your crime. Shall I tell you what saved me?"

There was no reply. Thoroughly subdued by the grave, pitying voice, the humility of the confession from one who held him so completely in his power, the guilty young clerk had turned his face to the wall, hiding it in his folded arms.

"I know nothing of your private life," Harry continued, after waiting a moment for an answer, that could not be spoken: "you may stand alone, exposed doubly to all temptation, or you may have relatives who would feel any disgrace to you deeply."

"It would kill my mother," came in muffled tones from the hidden lips.



“Does she know anything?”

No answer. Presently Harry crossed the room, and placing his hand on the young clerk's shoulder, said, “Will you not forget for a moment that I am but a boy, your employer's son, and feel that I am your friend, willing and ready to help you?”

The appeal was irresistible. Turning his white haggard face to the one that was full of the most earnest compassion, Davis Wright poured forth the history of his gradual descent from rectitude. It was a story only too common, of an introduction to society where money was a necessity to support extravagance, high play, late suppers, theatres, parties, and those well-gilded vices that seem so fascinating under the glamour of fashion. Weak, and possessing much beauty of face, with some accomplishments, Davis Wright had been led on and on, till his debts were of such magnitude that his creditors threatened to expose him to Mr. Westbrooke.

“It was when I was just desperate,” he said, “that Mr. Westbrooke called me in here one morning to take some checks to the bank. Just as he was giving me directions, Mr. Morrison crossed Mr. Poulson's office, and Mr. Westbrooke stepped out to meet him. There were some blank checks on the desk, and I slipped one into the bundle in my



hand. It was easy to say it was taken up in mistake if it was missed. But it was not. At the bank they gave me the month's returns, with all the checks for Mr. Westbrooke. When I came back, your father was out, and I left the bank-book and checks upon the desk, except one check I kept to copy. It was my first attempt at forgery, and I sat up all night working upon it. It seems I failed, if it has been already detected."

"It was detected at once, but as you were in the habit of transacting so much of the bank business, the notes given to you had their numbers taken, and the list and check were sent to the office. You understand that it became our duty at once to prove the offence. But we were very loath to accuse you, Davis. My father could scarcely believe you guilty."

"It was my first offence. If you will overlook it—"

"We cannot keep you here, Davis, in justice to those who have served us honestly."

"I must starve, then. No one will trust me if I leave here without recommendation."

"Have you no relative, no friend, to whom you could go, confessing your fault?"

"No one," was the reply. "You might as well



hand me over to the police as to turn me out. Oh!" and the white lips quivered like a child's, "why did I ever give way to my first temptation to dishonesty?"

"I think it was because you did not ask for help where alone it could be given, Davis. I know how strong temptation is, unless we resist it by a stronger power. You know what that is?"

Only a shivering moan for answer.

"Only prayer can save us, Davis. Only One can help us, and we must ask him for that help. Never does he turn a deaf ear. Did you try that safeguard, Davis?"

"No; I know nothing about prayer."

"Prayer saved me, Davis, and it will save you, if you seek its help."

And then, forgetting all else in his earnest desire to win this soul from the path of sin it had trodden so far, Harry spoke with forcible but simple words, with the eloquence born of sincere conviction, and tried to move the young clerk to a true penitence for his fault, a true appreciation of his frightful danger, not in this world only, but in that future he was so recklessly perilling, and urged him to flee to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

Poulson, listening nervously, heard only low



murmurs for more than an hour. Then Harry came out. "You will give Wright one of the Western agencies for the next three months," he said gravely, "with no money power."

Poulson looked doubtful, but made no comment.

"It will not do to throw further temptation in his way by turning him adrift," said Harry quietly. "We can remove him from the influences that are now about him in the way I propose, and the salary will keep him from any want, although less than he has had. If he does well, we may give him a better place in the same line. Get him off as soon as you can."

"I will, sir. How about the money he drew?"

"All gone but a few dollars. It was a mountain of debt that drove him to crime. I think he is thoroughly penitent, and in time will replace the amount. Poulson," with a coaxing hand on the old man's arm, "don't be hard on him."

And Poulson, with a very suspicious moisture on his eyelashes, and a great parade of blowing his nose, answered, "I'll be as gentle as if he was a week-old baby, Mr. Harry, and—" with sudden fierceness, "if he is a scamp again after such treatment, I'll take the law into my own hands next time."



"I hope there will be no 'next time,'" was the reply.

Mr. Westbrooke himself, when on his return the whole matter was laid before him, was inclined to think Harry had carried forgiveness a little too far, but made no proposals to recall the new agent. Years later, for we shall hear no more of Davis Wright in this volume, when that young man returned to New York, holding an honorable position, and gratefully acknowledged his obligations to Harry Westbrooke, that man, then holding his father's position in the business-world, felt that no business prosperity could ever give him the deep abiding joy he felt as with his hand held in a firm clasp, he heard Davis Wright say, "You saved me when I was hastening to destruction, and, boy as you were, led me into the way of salvation I humbly hope my feet are treading. My mother's prayers have ever your name in them, and she knows that she owes her joy that I am a Christian man to-day, to the lad who had the power to crush me, or to lift me, as he did, back to self-respect and a life of integrity."



## CHAPTER XXII.

*QUITE A MAN.*

“DEAR ELLEN :

“I think we must coax you away from Fairhaven for a few days, to help us to celebrate Harry’s coming of age appropriately. I am certain that the pleasures of the day will not be complete unless you are here, with Etta, to offer your congratulations to your nephew upon his attaining his majority and entering the firm of Westbrooke & Son. Send me word by what train to expect you, and I will meet you. Harry knows nothing of this letter, so your coming will be a real surprise.

“HENRY.”

“Are we going, Auntie,” said Etta, when she heard the contents of the letter.

“Not if you had rather stay here,” was the mischievous answer.

“Oh, I would n’t ! I would n’t !”

“Then I think we will go !”

Packing and preparing was merry work, and on a bright Thursday morning the two travellers took a train from Fairhaven, that reached New York at



five o'clock. Miss Westbrooke in the last three years had received frequent visits from both her brother and her nephew, and knew what a great change their constant companionship had made in Mr. Westbrooke. But she was not prepared for the almost boyish glee of the old merchant, as he led the way from the carriage to the room that had been made ready for his visitors.

"There!" he said, rubbing his hands, "I managed that to a charm. Harry has not the least idea that you are expected, and he is shut up in his room dressing for our grand reception at the counting-room. I have ordered dinner here, and then I will smuggle you into our room. You see, I was not quite prepared for this evening's engagement. My business friends have known for the last three years that I was only waiting until Harry came of age, to take him into the firm, and it would make you as proud as it makes me, Ellen, if you could hear the respect and cordial liking in their words and manner when they speak of him. This morning I received a note saying that as they supposed my engagements for to-morrow were already made, they would take pleasure in offering their congratulations this evening between eight and nine, at the countingroom. So we have had the partitions



taken down, the desks put aside, and the space prepared for a reception. You will excuse us, I know, and I want Harry to find you on his return, when he will not have to hurry away from you. To-morrow you must see the new sign put up."

Miss Westbrooke, calming Etta with some difficulty, watched the carriage containing father and son drive away from the door of the boardinghouse, and then went directly to her brother's private sitting-room, from which as of old, two bedrooms opened.

"Now, Etta, ring the bell," she said, "and we will send for a carriage too, and take a short drive."

Etta, who was quite unable to stand upon both feet at once, but hopped about alternately upon one or the other, gave the bell a vigorous jerk, and heard the order given for the carriage in great excitement.

"Where are we going, Auntie?" she asked.

"Shopping! Get your hat and sacque."

There was not much time for elaborate preparation, but willing hands made quick work. They quickly despatched their shopping, and as the carriage with Harry and his father drove again to the door, Etta, half-choking with fun popped into one bedroom, while Miss Ellen scarcely less excited vanished in the doorway of the other.



The sittingroom door opened, and Harry cried: "The fairies have been here! This must be your work, father!"

"I assure you I had no hand in it!"

It did look like fairy work. The gas burners were all brilliantly lighted, and upon the lace curtains and over the picture frames hung wreaths of green leaves. The large table was drawn into the centre of the room, and upon its snowy cloth were vases of exquisite flowers, a large birthday cake, pyramids of ice cream, amber-colored jellies, and other dainties, while around one plate were placed some tasteful gifts.

"Who could have done this?" Harry cried, and was answered by a smothered little giggle from his own room, that caused him, quite unmindful of his new dignities, to dart in there and capture Etta.

"You darling! You precious pet!" he cried, smothering her with kisses, and disarranging her white dress and blue ribbons most wofully, "where is Aunt Ellen?"

"Not far away, as you might guess," said Mr. Westbrooke leading his sister forward, "I think that the fairies were loving hearts and quick fingers, my son!"

"Is n't it pretty?" cried Etta, dancing round the



table, "and wasn't it fun to see Auntie hurrying the shop-boys around? They never could be here in time, they said, but she brought home lots of things in the carriage, and all the rest did come! I helped, brother Harry!"

"I know you did, blue eyes! Thank you both! Now, Aunt Ellen, you must admire my present."

As he spoke he placed in his aunt's hands a handsome morocco case, which, being opened, was found to contain a gold watch, with chain and seal, all of the most beautiful workmanship, and solid heavy gold. Upon the watch Harry's monogram, glistening in tiny diamonds, was displayed.

"A present," said Mr. Westbrooke, "of which I am as proud as Harry can be, for it is given to my son as a token of esteem, by my old business friends and customers of many years' standing. Our reception was but a short one, Ellen, but the men who grasped Harry's hand to-night, and welcomed him as one of their future associates in business, were men whom it is an honor to know, who will be stanch to him, as they were to me in my day of trouble. We wiped out our last obligation on the old score some days ago, Ellen, and 'Westbrooke & Son' can now look the world fairly in the face, owing no man a dollar."











"I think," said Etta gravely, after Miss Ellen had given her nephew a cordial embrace, that his new manhood accepted as lovingly as ever his old boyhood had done, "I see that ice-cream is all melting away!"

"To prevent such a catastrophe," said Harry gravely, "allow me to escort you to a seat."

He stooped his tall, manly figure till Etta could put her little hand upon his arm, and led her most ceremoniously to the pretty table. The great birthday cake was cut, the cream handed round, and Mr. Westbrooke rose to propose Harry's health in glasses of pure cold water. His short speech was made in rather a broken voice, and Harry responded with most exaggerated bows and flourishes, to Etta's great delight. Then there was a great game of romps over a dish of cracking bonbons, and the presents from Fairhaven were duly admired.

Etta was very proud of a set of handkerchiefs she had hemmed herself, with Harry's initial very neatly worked in the corners. Mary had sent a most gorgeous worsted-work pincushion, with H. W. upon it, not in a diamond monogram, but in shining pin heads. David, in a note that it was harder toil to him to write than any full day's farm-work



he had ever undertaken, "hoped Mr. Harry would accept a flower he had been coaxing to perfection for three months, for this happy day;" said flower being a superb rosebush in full bloom. Aunt Ellen's gift was a dainty scarfpin, set in a very handsome scarf, and Harry admired everything to Etta's full satisfaction.

All the Fairhaven news had to be told, with inquiries for relatives and neighbors who had become friends during the summer visits to the farm, and then the prospects of the new firm came under discussion.

"We shall not be rich for many years," Mr. Westbrooke said, "but we are sailing in very fair waters, and when I retire, I think I can take sufficient income from the business for all my wants without crippling Harry."

"I hope it will be long before you retire," said his son, respectfully and lovingly. "If you do no more than look in for an hour each day, it will give a dignity to the firm I am afraid it would sorely miss if I were the sole Westbrooke there. Aunt Ellen, when will you come and keep house for us?"

Miss Westbrooke smiled, saying, "I think I shall leave that position open for a very much younger applicant, Mr. Westbrooke. There are



occasional birds from New York flying about Fairhaven, and one of them whispered a little story to me."

Harry colored and laughed, but Etta cried, "Oh please tell the story, Auntie."

"Once upon a time," said Miss Ellen, "there was a young lad, almost a man, to whom there came some misfortunes. He had a great many friends who were very glad to see him while he was prosperous, but who were but coldly civil or actually rude to him when troubles came. But one friend, a friend governed by Christian principles, never asked if this young lad was rich or poor, but kept up all his old cordiality."

"What was his name, Auntie?"

"His name was Frank Wiley."

"Why, that is the gentleman who came to Fairhaven last summer with brother Harry, and asked me if I caught sunbeams in my curls."

"The very same! This same Frank Wiley has a sister, too, Etta, not a little girl like you, but a sweet young lady of eighteen, with blue eyes and brown hair."

"Like the picture in brother Harry's locket?"

"O dear, dear! I think you are telling the story, Etta," said Mr. Westbrooke. "But our



young people are going to wait a year or two, Ellen, before your little romance ends as all romances do, in a wedding. They are young yet, although our Harry will be a man to-morrow."

"And I think," said Miss Ellen, "that if Etta does not shut up her eyes pretty soon, they will be too sleepy to read that new sign we are to see put up over the old store."

Mr. Westbrooke rose at this hint, and drawing forward a little stand, opened the Book that always rested there. The others grouped around him while he read a chapter, and knelt as he offered a fervent prayer, thanking his heavenly Father that they were all permitted to unite in his worship, and for the many blessings of that happy hour.

Then, with loving embraces, the little party separated for the night. But long after Etta was sound asleep the others lay awake thinking with fervent thanksgiving of the happiness that had followed their sorrows and anxieties, the bright prospects that were opening before the feet of the young pilgrim who had so nobly taken up his cross when almost a man.















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